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# *The* Reading Teacher

Vol. 8, No. 1

October 1954

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## Contents

	Page
IMPROVING BASAL READING INSTRUCTION— Gerald A. Yoakam.....	3
SYSTEMATIC INSTRUCTION IN BASIC READING SKILLS—Gerald A. Yoakam.....	4
CHALLENGE VERSUS FRUSTRATION IN BASIC READING—Emmett A. Betts.....	8
APPROACHES TO BASAL READING INSTRUCTION —Anne C. Owens.....	13
THE PLACE OF PHONICS IN BASAL READING INSTRUCTION—Josephine Tronsberg.....	18
PREVENTION OF READING DISABILITIES AS A BASAL READING PROBLEM—A. Sterl Artley.....	21
VOCABULARY CONTROL—MORE OR LESS?— Donald D. Durtell.....	25
THE CHILD AND HIS BASIC READING MATERIALS—Gertrude Whipple.....	30
APPRAISAL OF GROWTH IN READING— Miles A. Tinker.....	35
WHAT IS BASIC IN READING INSTRUCTION?— Alvina Treut Burrows.....	39
WHERE SHALL WE START IN READING?— Clara E. Cockerille.....	43
WHAT RESEARCH SAYS TO THE READING TEACHER—Helen M. Robinson.....	46
WHAT OTHER MAGAZINES ARE SAYING ABOUT THE TEACHING OF READING—Muriel Potter.....	50
CHILDREN'S BOOKS AND THE TEACHING OF READING—Nancy Larrick.....	56
I.C.I.R.I. IS GROWING—Paul Witty.....	59
A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT— —Margaret A. Robinson.....	62
NEWS OF LOCAL COUNCILS—Josephine Tronsberg.	63

THE READING TEACHER is published four times a year, October, December, February, and April, by the International Council for the Improvement of Reading Instruction (I.C.I.R.I.). Headquarters: The Reading Laboratory, University of Pittsburgh, Fifth Avenue and Bigelow Blvd., Pittsburgh 13, Pennsylvania. Mailed to all members of the I.C.I.R.I. in good standing according to its constitution and by-laws. Available to non-members at a subscription of \$2.50 per year. 1-9 copies, \$1.00 each; 10-24 copies, 75c each; 25-49 copies, 60c each; 50-99 copies, 50c each; 100 or more, 45c each. Copyright, 1954 by The International Council for the Improvement of Reading Instruction, Inc. Entered as Second-Class Matter at the Post Office at Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

## Guest Editor

FOR THIS ISSUE is Dr. Gerald A. Yoakam, professor of education and director of courses in elementary education at the University of Pittsburgh. Dr. Yoakam has had a long and distinguished career in education. His achievements in this field have been many and worthwhile. He has won an enviable position in education not only in his Tri-State Area but also throughout the nation.

Dr. Yoakam's special interest is in research in reading and language. He has encouraged a countless number of his graduate students to do research in these two areas. Research on readability has received much emphasis. He invented the Yoakam Readability Formula, which many of you have used as an easy method of evaluating the difficulty of instructional materials.

Dr. Yoakam is co-author of a series of basal readers and also of a series of very popular graded spelling books. He has written a number of professional books for teachers. His first book for teachers, *READING AND STUDY*, was published in 1928. After all the years, it is still considered a classic in its field. It is constantly being quoted by other authors. His latest professional book for teachers is entitled, *BASAL READING INSTRUCTION*. It will be published this fall. A review of the book will appear in a later issue of the magazine.

In addition to acting as guest editor, Dr. Yoakam has written the introduction and the first article of this series on improving basal reading instruction. We are indebted to him and to a number of other experts for these informative discussions. The other experts who have written articles for the series are: Dr. A. Sterl Artley, Dr. Emmett A. Betts, Dr. Donald Durrell, Miss Anne C. Owens, Dr. Miles Tinker, Miss Josephine Tronsberg, and Dr. Gertrude Whipple.

Dr. Alvina Treut Burrows, who is well known to the reading teachers of America, has written a thought-provoking article entitled, "What is Basic in Reading?" There are also several articles of general interest. Two new columns appear in this issue. Dr. Helen M. Robinson has gleaned some "gems" from research findings, which should prove helpful to the classroom teachers. Miss Larrick, former editor, has a column on children's books, which is very informative. Dr. Muriel Potter continues with her review of materials found in other magazines. Dr. Bertha Friedman will review professional books for us beginning with the next issue of our journal.

The December issue of *THE READING TEACHER* will feature the improvement of reading in the content areas. Dr. Artley has consented to act as guest editor for the issue. Be on the look-out for some very helpful and practical materials to come from him and his writers.

J. ALLEN FIGUREL, Editor

And Now . . .

56

To Introduce the Feature Theme:

## *Improving Basal Reading Instruction*

**T**HERE IS EVIDENCE of a growing recognition by teachers of reading of the need for increased emphasis on a developmental program of guidance and instruction for children in learning how to read effectively. The foundation of any program for teaching reading is a plan for teaching the basal reading skills common to all reading situations. For 150 years leaders in education in America have been struggling with the problem of teaching all citizens to read. So important is it that every child shall learn to read that plan after plan of teaching the basal reading skills to children has been tried for a time, modified, and changed in whole or in part in an effort to find a way of teaching the young citizens of America to read intelligently.

The impact of Gestalt psychology on the teaching of reading was to question the methods of teaching the child to read which stressed the systematic building of reading skills day by day without due emphasis on the use of reading by the child in satisfying his needs and purposes, i.e., against the formal, rather than functional method of teaching reading. Misinterpretation of the theory of learning by doing caused some to criticize the systematic methods advocated by the basal school readers. Using the basal reader in teaching the child to read became unpopular in some quarters. Many believed that the child could learn to read as an incident in the pursuit of other purposes. For a time this plan was tried in many schools; but the number of children who failed to learn to read continued to be large even in schools where learning to read by reading was practiced, as well as in traditional schools.

Attention finally turned to the prevention of reading retardation and disability. It seemed clear that the best way to prevent reading retardation was to plan a systematic developmental program of basal reading instruction as the foundation of a balanced program of basal, curricular, recreatory, and corrective reading. It is the purpose of this number of *THE READING TEACHER* to present views of a group of experts on the improvement of the program of basal reading instruction in our schools. We believe that administrators and teachers far and wide are deeply concerned about their foundational work in reading and that this number of the magazine will be widely welcomed by them.

GERALD A. YOAKAM, Guest Editor

## Systematic Instruction In Basic Reading Skills

by GERALD A. YOAKAM  
● UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH

THE NEED for systematic instruction in basic reading skills is frequently revealed by the plight of children who are suffering from reading retardation or disability because of their inability to cope with the mechanics of interpreting the printed page. Diagnostic studies have shown time and again that many children have failed to learn to read because of the lack of skilled systematic instruction. The great majority of children need systematic instruction in the basic reading skills until they have mastered the mechanics of recognition and interpretation and become able to help themselves. Slow learning children need much more systematic instruction than average or fast learners, but all children profit from skilled guidance in learning the basic reading skills. How long this systematic instruction should continue is perhaps a debatable question. Some seem to feel that children can learn to read largely by reading to learn and that if they wish to read badly enough, they will contrive to learn to read without so much systematic instruction and practice as has characterized reading instruction in the schools of the past. Certainly no modern educator would wish to inflict on children monotonous, meaningless practice or drill in learning to read. On the other hand, no modern educator would wish to neglect the systematic instruction of children in the

basic skills that are essential in the interpretation of the printed page.

The alternative to systematic instruction in teaching children to read is learning to read through a method of trial-and-success in which learning to read is incidental to the accomplishment of some purpose that requires the use of reading as a tool for the gathering of information or the enjoyment of an experience. That many children have learned to read in a more or less trial-and-success way with a minimum of systematic guidance and practice is obviously true. But that an incidental method of teaching children to read would succeed in schools with classes of thirty and forty pupils is extremely doubtful. It is true that there is a great need for much experience in reading for various purposes and that in doing such reading children learn to read; but it is also true that in order to learn to read by reading, systematic instruction in the basic reading skills is essential, just as in learning to run a typewriter or in learning to write, systematic lessons in the learning of basic skills is required.

If it is agreed that systematic instruction is essential in the learning of complex skills such as reading, then the next question that arises is, "What is systematic instruction?" The answer to this question would seem to be quite simple, since systematic in-

struction is the most common type of instruction in reading. Systematic instruction is planned day-by-day instruction in teaching the child to read. It is most commonly carried on through the use of basal school readers with their accompanying manuals, workbooks, and accessory materials. It can be carried on, however, by other methods; (a) through the use of experience materials prepared by pupils and teacher; and (2) through the use of a variety of printed materials integrated into a program for the development of basal reading abilities. The latter two methods are more difficult to use than the basal reader method. It is believed by many that the latter two methods are more functional and are better suited to meeting the needs of children and serving their interests. That these methods require greater ingenuity in the selection of material, greater creativeness in planning a program of instruction, and great skill in the selection and use of method cannot be doubted.

#### **Basic Principles for Developing Reader's Skills**

In the opinion of the writer there are certain principles which should be followed in the development of a program of systematic instruction in the basic reading skills. These principles will be stated here with no attempt to defend them, since few people would wish to disagree with them:

1. Systematic instruction should begin with the present development and needs of the learner. An inflexible program designed for the average child will not be most effective for

groups of children in a given school since there are wide differences in the composition of individual teaching groups.

2. Systematic instruction should be purposeful for the child. He must read for meaning and use while he learns the basic reading skills.

3. Systematic instruction should be differentiated for slow, average and fast learners. The rate at which a child is learning to read is an important factor in his success. Instruction that moves too fast or too slow will interfere with his progress and may lead to retardation and even disability.

4. The materials used in the systematic program for the development of basic skills should be adapted to the learner's rate of learning and to his present reading level. This means that there must be great freedom for the teacher to select and use instructional materials which meet the child's present needs, regardless of how such materials are labeled.

5. There should be no gaps in the systematic instruction of the child in the basic reading skills. One of the most common causes of reading retardation and disability is the gaps in the child's experience due to transfer from one grade to another without adjustment of the program to his needs. Many a child is lost between grade one and two, or three and four.

6. Instruction in the basic reading skills should be continuous until each essential skill is learned and functions properly in the child's reading. Transfers to one school from another, periods of illness, and lack of continuity in the reading program from grade to

grade can result in serious harm to the child.

7. Frequent appraisal of the child's progress, diagnosis of difficulties, and appropriate corrective instruction should characterize a well organized program of systematic instruction in the basic reading skills.

### **Eight Major Problems**

The major problems which the systematic teaching of the basic reading skills present to the school and the teacher seem to the writer to fall into at least eight categories. These problems will be briefly presented here but not elaborated because of lack of space.

1. *The problem of readiness.* In the past many children failed in the first grade because they were unready to read. Today the means are available to deal with this problem. All entering children should be examined and their readiness to read determined by both measurement and observation. A reading readiness program should be set up and carefully administered with the purpose of readying all children to learn to read as soon as possible.

2. *The problem of sight recognition.* The child, as soon as he is ready to read, should be taught a sight vocabulary as rapidly as possible in order that he may read for meaning and learn to enjoy the experience of reading for pleasure or for information. Meaningful reading should characterize the program of systematic instruction in sight recognition from the first.

3. *The problem of the develop-*

*ment of independence in recognition.* The child will not learn to read independently until he learns the techniques of independence in word recognition. The systematic teaching of the techniques useful in recognition should begin as soon as the child has a mental age of 6.5 or 7.0, and be systematically taught until he becomes independent in the recognition of new and strange words.

4. *The problem of achieving and extending meaning.* The purpose of all reading is to get meaning from the printed page. Several things interfere with the achievement of reading,—lack of skill in word recognition, a small meaning vocabulary, lack of experience, too difficult material, and the like. From the very beginning systematic instruction in the basic skills of comprehension must accompany instruction in the word recognition skills. The child should always read for meaning. Until the child has learned to cope with new meanings as they are met in reading matter, he cannot read independently. Systematic instruction in the development of meaning is an essential characteristic of a good reading program.

5. *The problem of fluency in cursory reading.* The child must learn to read fluently in a cursory way before he will read for pleasure. Every child who has the capacity should learn to read fluently on some level. Until this task is accomplished, most children will refuse to read unless pressured by the teacher and will take little pleasure in reading. Too often schools are willing to settle for something less than fluent reading.

6. *The problem of the basic study skills.* The child must learn to read fluently on some level before he is ready to attack the mastery of the basic study skills. He should have systematic instruction in the basic study skills just as soon as he needs to read books for the purpose of acquiring information. This occurs to some extent in grades two and three, but it is essential in the middle grades and beyond. The basal reading program should attempt to teach systematically the study skills common to all study situations. Study skills peculiar to a curricular field should be developed as needed in connection with the study of curricular units.

7. *The problem of the use of ideas.* Children should be taught to use ideas gained from reading for both pleasure and information from the early stages of learning to read. Reading as a tool for learning is so important that they should learn how to use it to help them solve problems, extend their experience, and carry on activities. The school should not be content with its reading program until it appears that children are learning how to use reading in their everyday affairs to enrich experience and gain enjoyment. Throughout the elementary school children should be learning how to use books for a variety of purposes and should develop the habit of reading to find help in everyday living.

8. *The problem of learning to choose reading material and to plan a reading program.* Systematic instruction in the choice of reading material is essential if children are to learn how

to distinguish good material from bad, where to find desirable materials, and how to organize their personal reading. This instruction seems necessary in the light of the studies of the reading habits of adults which indicates very little skill on their part in the choice of reading matter and almost a complete lack of planned, worthwhile reading. Throughout the elementary and the secondary school skilled teachers should guide children in the choice of worth-while reading matter and help them to plan rewarding reading experience. They should be taught to balance their reading between reading for fun and reading for profit and to manage their time so that they have a generous allowance for worth-while reading.

There seems to be very little chance, in the light of the facts concerning the nature of the problem involved in teaching children to read, that the task can be accomplished without a carefully planned systematic program of instruction in the basic reading skills. Unless a person charged with this responsibility is constantly at work planning and developing learning experiences for children which teach them how to use basic reading skills, there is little hope that the majority of children will learn to read effectively. Reading is too complex a skill to be learned well without carefully-planned, systematic instruction. Basal reading instruction needs to be more skilfully developed in the future than it has been in the past if America's children are to learn to read well for both pleasure and profit.

## Challenge Versus Frustration In Basic Reading

by EMMETT ALBERT BETTS  
● TEMPLE UNIVERSITY

HAVING OBTAINED a temporary teaching certificate, Miss Betty Zeal was assigned to a third-grade classroom. Here she was welcomed warmly by thirty-two lovely children, mostly eight-year olds.

Beforehand, Miss Zeal had inventoried her teaching materials: thirty-five copies of two sets of third-grade readers and the same number of third-grade spellers, arithmetics, language books, etc. So here she was with thirty-two third-graders and a liberal supply of third-grade books. With these children and these materials, teaching would be a thrilling experience.

After a get-acquainted period, Miss Zeal followed her plan of having a directed reading activity in a 3-1 basic reader. Following the manual, she helped the pupils to develop an interest in reading the story, to make some important concepts to take to it, and to set up a strong motive for reading it. Then she permitted two volunteers to distribute copies of the attractive books to the class. Everything worked out according to plan, with the pupils locating the selection in the table of contents, giving it a quick go-over, and settling down to their silent reading.

### Big Differences Are Discovered

Soon, however, Miss Zeal was aware that not everything was going according to plan. While many pupils were giving individual attention to the story, almost one-third of the class didn't

seem to know what to do. Johnny just stared at his book. Susan and Charles were thumbing through the book, looking at the pictures. Jack, Merrill, Marie, Leonard, and Betty were stuck on the first page, whispering and mumbling the words to themselves. Gerry and Carol were frowning and twisting as they turned to the second page. To make matters worse, several pupils finished reading the story in five to seven minutes. Something was wrong with her use of the plan, she concluded.

Since Miss Zeal knew how to get along with children, she guided them in the discussion of the story, permitting the fast readers to re-read orally and silently parts of the story to illustrate or to prove a point. By this time she decided not to use the regular study book until she knew what to do.

During the rest of the morning Miss Zeal learned more about her pupils. Johnny who would not attempt to read the story knew a lot about stamps and coins. Jack and Marie were leaders in playground games. All of the non-readers and slow readers were poor in spelling. So was Jim who appeared to be a good reader. While they had many interests in common, they also had many individual interests and abilities.

### Experience Counts

At the noon hour, Miss Zeal went to see Mrs. Wright, who proved to be

an experienced and respected teacher as well as principal. After listening to Miss Zeal's discoveries, Mrs. Wright explained that she had already taken the first step in becoming a good teacher. Now that she was aware of *big* differences in interests and abilities, she could make the most of them by grouping the children for different activities.

During the lunch hour, Miss Zeal raised many questions. All children in the third grade cannot be taught from the same book? How do I estimate a pupil's reading level? Do I have to work with each pupil individually? How many reading groups should I have? What should I do for the fast readers? Where do I get books at different reader levels? What are the other groups to do while I am doing a directed reading activity with one group? How do I group for spelling and arithmetic? Then, should I start with grouping for reading?

Miss Zeal was now stimulated to do some positive thinking about individual differences in her classroom. Furthermore, she was convinced that Mrs. Wright was a very realistic and practical teacher. However, as Mrs. Wright suggested, she would have to begin at the beginning — by estimating each pupil's level of achievement. This information, then, could be used not only to improve her pupils' reading abilities but also to understand their needs in spelling, writing, arithmetic, science, and the social studies.

Mrs. Wright assured her that she would be on hand to help when needed. Then she explained that there was more than one way to group. Per-

haps it would be better to begin with grouping for basic reading instruction. But, first, it would be necessary to find out which reader level was best suited for each child.

### Reading Levels Are Estimated

Remembering the advice of Mrs. Wright, Miss Zeal obtained a set of basic readers. Since the series did not extend above the sixth reader, she located readers for the seventh and eighth grades. Armed with these books, she decided to study two or three pupils.

While the class was busy looking up material on American Indians, Miss Zeal took Johnny in tow. She had observed that he didn't even attempt to read the story in the 3-1 reader the first morning. She explained that she wanted to help him with his reading. Then she briefed him on how each book in the series was more difficult and on how she proposed to have him read, beginning with the easiest book, until he found out how high he could go.

Johnny read a primer story with more ease than he read the pre-primer. He seemed to stumble more over the short sentences in the pre-primer. But when he tried to read in the first reader, he ran his thumb under each line of type, began to use lip movement, and hesitated on one word in about every ten or fifteen words.

Miss Zeal was greatly relieved when she found how easy it was to estimate the reader level at which Johnny was not hopelessly lost. With some confidence, she assured Johnny that he could learn to be a better reader by

beginning with the second book (a primer); that he did very well with the book. And Johnny was inclined to agree with her.

At the very next opportunity, Miss Zeal used the books to find the reading level of Henry who had read the 3-1 story in five minutes. Reflecting on this observation, she began with the fourth reader. But he had no difficulty with understanding or word pronunciation in this book. Nor did he in the fifth or sixth readers! He did, however, have some problems with the seventh reader.

All of this amazing information in just a few minutes! Now Miss Zeal decided to study Susan, Jack, and Carol. But she didn't have time to make an individual study of all pupils.

During her next chat with Mrs. Wright she reported what she had learned. First, that Johnny could read a primer without signs of trouble and that Henry could read all the books through sixth-reader level. Mrs. Wright calmly explained that this was an unusual third-grade class because a typical third-grade ranged in reading ability from zero to about seventh-reader level.

Now Miss Zeal's problem was how to save time in estimating the reading levels of all the children. To this question, Mrs. Wright had a ready answer, "Just look for the same needs and the same signs of trouble every time the children are reading on their own or in a directed reading activity. Since you understand how textbooks are graded and the idea of pupil reading levels, you will seldom need to make individual studies. Just remember to

challenge rather than frustrate each pupil." This Mrs. Wright deserved her reputation as a master teacher, Miss Zeal thought.

So Miss Zeal learned how to estimate a pupil's independent and instructional reading levels. (1, Ch. XXI)

### Groups Are Organized

On the morning of her first meeting with the class she had been vaguely aware of big differences among the children. Now she saw the need for at least three groups. Johnny who stared at the 3-1 book and the five pupils who slowly mumbled the words to themselves needed special help in easier books. Four other children needed easier books to read because they whispered the words to themselves, used their thumbs or fingers to follow each line of type, and seemed under tension. Fourteen pupils could do satisfactory reading in the 3-1 book. Twelve pupils, however, had no problems to be solved by reading the 3-1 book and were obviously prepared to read more difficult books.

Since Miss Zeal thought a problem through before she acted, she spent a lot of time planning her approach to the pupils, selecting appropriate materials, and considering the needs of her pupils. By the end of the second week, she had won over her pupils to the idea of reading groups. While she had many little problems, her big problems had been partly solved. Above all, she observed, the children seemed to be more interested.

While Miss Zeal was learning how to group her pupils, she learned a great

many other things. Most of the children were intensely interested in fairy tales. Some of the boys who were good readers showed considerable interest in real-life stories. Carol, a very good reader, was intrigued by a pictured encyclopedia, browsing in a volume at every opportunity. Henry, the best reader, brought to school copies of *Popular Mechanics* and the *Reader's Digest*. If she encouraged the pupils to pursue their interests, with some guidance, they worked like beavers. So one of the keys to success in grouping was to find materials in which pupils took an interest! (2)

Often Miss Zeal reflected on Mrs. Wright's sage remark that a child must be challenged but not frustrated. As long as the children had access to books and *My Weekly Readers* that were not too difficult, they took a keen interest in reading. While Johnny and Susan and others in the lowest reading group selected easy reading, Henry and his group were fascinated by a beginning dictionary, encyclopedias, the World Almanac, geographies, and science and history books. On the basis of these facts, Miss Zeal concluded that materials too difficult or too easy could cause interest to wane.

Miss Zeal also had glimpses of how the pupils felt about themselves and about each other. Johnny, the poorest reader, had not been very sure of himself in most classroom activities but was now responding to a diet of challenge and success. Susan, the shy one, was more self-assured. Leonard and Gerry, who had been uncooperative with the group, were learning the value of teamwork. Charles and Marie were

learning to follow through on projects, to develop persistence in reading—study activities. Merrill had discovered *Friday—The Arapaho Indian*. Henry, Carolyn, Homer, and Bud were less bored and obviously had a feeling of belongingness as they shared information and recommended *Black Beauty*, *Treasure Island*, *The Flying Dutchman*, and other literature. All in all, Miss Zeal felt, the children had faith in themselves and in their classmates.

Since Miss Zeal was very sensitive to individual needs, she soon discovered a real need for flexible grouping. Johnny and Susan, for example, made very rapid progress soon after they had been relieved of the tension set up during two years of frustration. When Charles discovered that reading was thinking, not memorization of each page, he moved ahead rapidly. After Jack learned how to analyze words for pronunciation, he literally soared in his reading. Leonard, Betty, and others progressed more slowly, apparently having less aptitude for reading. For these and other reasons, Miss Zeal, with an eye on healthy human relationships, gradually re-grouped.

Furthermore, Miss Zeal learned that pupils played different roles in different group activities. As the children learned more about group self-management through group planning, they used more and more the special aptitudes and abilities of individuals. Henry, for example, was sharp in science but he deferred to Marie in arts activities. Gerry was given a high status in many dramatizations. Those insights helped Miss Zeal bring the concept of flexible grouping to even

higher levels of accomplishment. (3)

### **Planning Is Learned**

One of the secrets in making the most of individual differences, Miss Zeal discovered, was in group planning. She found that many of the study-book pages were really test, not developmental, activities. For this reason, she gave special attention to the preparation of each group for these activities. First, she made sure that the children understood why they were studying the syllabication of words, shifts of meaning of words, etc. Secondly, she worked out a plan of self-help for each activity so they could work independently. After each study-book activity, the group met to discuss their achievement and needs. This same kind of planning was used in other group activities.

As the weeks rolled by, Miss Zeal became an expert administrator and the pupils became expert planners. By careful planning, always with the children, she was able to work with one group while the other children worked individually or in groups. Plan, check, revise, organize, evaluate — these terms were soon accepted as a part of the children's vocabulary and action.

What Miss Zeal learned from her conferences with parents was very encouraging. At home, Susan was beginning to read books brought from school. Charles reported he had learned how water gets out of the air. Jack told his father about how messages were sent a long time ago. For the first time, Marie read a story—*Singing Farmer*—to her family. Other parents offered similar anecdotes. Only

two parents raised questions about grouping but they were satisfied to wait and see. Above all, Miss Zeal learned that children make the best ambassadors for a sensible school program.

### **Professional Growth Continues**

During the second semester, Miss Zeal prepared herself to do a better job. She read the best books she could find on word perception, on the thinking abilities of children, on children's interests, and on group processes. As she mastered these concepts, she became aware of more pupil needs. (1, 2, 4, 5)

Soon Miss Zeal was making use of the whole class to plan a unit in the social studies. After they had outlined what they already knew about the unit and the questions they wanted answered, they organized into small groups to find materials and answers. She found this took even more planning and more books and more magazines. She also learned that the pupils could judge which books were readable for them.

Equally important, she sensed the value of knowing each child's independent, or free, reading level, and the readability levels of different materials. In guiding these activities, she was able to help the children grow in the use of word perception skills and in the ability to evaluate the relevance and truth of statements.

In relation to her basic-reader groups, Miss Zeal learned when and how to organize a small group to deal with initial consonant blends, word endings, the difference between state-

ments of fact and of opinions, a detail on a frieze, and other specific needs. Occasionally, she could prevent a difficulty by giving five minutes of help to one pupil. Indeed, Mrs. Wright had been a wise colleague: there was more than one way to make the most of individual differences in a classroom.

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## Approaches to Basal Reading Instruction

by ANNE C. OWENS

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NO DOUBT, a statistician could present an astonishing figure if he were to count the number of boys and girls in this country who sometime before noon tomorrow will open their books to read about the activities of Dick and Jane, Alice and Jerry, Kim and Wendy, or the other dozen or so basal reading characters. He would find, however, some classrooms with no basal readers, but with a display of pictures, a large number of story and factual books, and easel charts waiting for the recording of the day's plans and experiences. At the present time the basal reader approach and the experience approach are the principal ways for introducing the teaching of reading. Both are described in detail in the issues of *THE READING TEACHER* and will be discussed only briefly here.

### The Experience Approach

The experience approach is often used to initiate the reading program. It is by no means restricted to the primary level. By this plan the children supply the subject matter (plans, diaries, rules, letters, directions) which the teacher writes in "manuscript" style on large charts or on the chalkboard. The teacher guides the composition in order to control sentence structure and vocabulary. Since the reading material thus obtained is a result of group discussion there is assurance that it is interesting to the children and within their comprehension.

The experience approach has some advantages over the basal reader and in the hands of a competent teacher is highly effective. No textbook can explore the needs and interests of a

particular class as well as the teacher can. However, there are some pitfalls which a teacher attempting experience writing for the first time should avoid. Each word introduced in the reading material must be repeated in *meaningful context* a number of times to insure learning. When each day's chart becomes flooded with new words and little provision is made for the repetition of those previously introduced the *reading chart* becomes a *language chart* — interesting and valuable for language growth, but of little use in developing word-recognition abilities. Again, teachers are not always sure which words merit repetition. Too often the dramatic but transient words, like *Jack-O'-Lantern*, *goblin*, or *Hallowe'en* (which are the easiest for children to remember) are selected for study and repetition to the neglect of the uninteresting but highly important service words: *want*, *have*, *goes*, *was*, *went*, etc.

These admonitions are not meant to discourage teachers from attempting the experience approach but to make them aware of errors which might lead to discouraging results. The excellent articles in this issue provide inspiration and guidance for those seeking a fresh approach to reading instruction.

### The Basal Reader Approach

The omnipresent basal reader has become associated with the reading program to such an extent that many feel it is indispensable. Teachers using experience reading often find that although a child's word recognition vocabulary may exceed that of a pre-

primer, his parents feel that reading from classroom prepared materials is not "bona-fide" reading. Since there is such dependence upon basal readers it is fortunate that those offered today are generally of high quality. The books grow more attractive each year: stories are based upon children's interests, vocabulary is carefully controlled, provision is made for systematic development of word recognition and comprehension skills. Each series is the result of many years of research in the literature pertaining to language growth and development.

Each basal reader is accompanied by a manual or guide which contains plans for directing the reading activities. Although terminologies vary among authors the sequence of teaching steps is generally that described by Betts in *FOUNDATIONS OF READING INSTRUCTION*:

1. *Readiness*. Through group discussion the teacher surveys the pupils' background of experience related to the story and stimulates interest in reading. She introduces into the conversation the new words and concepts which will be met in the story.
2. *Guided Silent Reading*. Authorities are agreed that silent should always precede oral reading. Immature readers need guiding questions for reading a few lines; a single motivating question may be sufficient for mature readers.
3. *Development of Comprehension and Word Recognition Skills*. A pupil's apparent ease

in silent reading is no guarantee that he is comprehending. After silent reading a lively discussion stirred up by some thought-provoking questions by the teacher affords an opportunity to appraise pupils' understanding of the story read.

(At this point of the lesson, any word which proved difficult for *most of the members of the group* during silent reading period receives attention so that it will not prove a barrier to comprehension during the rereading. Even in the best regulated classrooms some emergency arises which cuts down the time available for reading. The conclusion of this third stage is a logical place to end the day's reading. Stages 4 and 5 may be postponed to a later time.)

4. *Rereading.* Rereading may be silent or oral. In the lower grades emphasis is usually placed upon oral reading. It is very important that the rereading be done for purposes which are different from those which motivated the first reading.

5. *Follow-Up.* Learnings developed by the lesson may be applied in various activities suggested by the manual or workbook. Interests awakened by the basal reader story may be followed by reading similar material written at the pupils' independent reading levels. Individual or group needs revealed during the earlier stages of the directed reading activity are cared for at this time.

When pressed for time

teachers find it a good plan to give explanations concerning follow-up directly after the re-reading and to provide time later in the day for its accomplishment. For instance, during the period that the teacher is working with another group there is opportunity for independent reading activities.

As has been stated the basal reader suffers the disadvantage of being unable to follow the temporary interests of children. A teacher may find that just when the children are excited about trimming Christmas trees and writing letters to Santa Claus the basal reader is telling how much fun little Joe had at the Hallowe'en party. However, this is not an insurmountable difficulty. The number of "dated" selections in the average reader is small. The sensible teacher will skip that Hallowe'en story and provide for the learnings introduced in it through an experience reading lesson, or by some other means. While stories may not relate to classroom concerns of the moment a skilful teacher finds no difficulty in arousing interest. A stirring tale of adventure, a good dog story, or a chuckly yarn are in season at any time of the year.

An experienced teacher may disregard the manual which accompanies the basal reader, although it can prove useful as a source book for lists of films, recordings, stories, or poems which add zest to the text book lessons. Many manuals also have answers to that burning question: "What independent learning activities can I give the other groups when I am working

with one of the instructional groups?"

A newly appointed teacher is wise to cling tenaciously to the manual during the months when she is trying to digest half a dozen curriculum guides, becoming familiar with a system of record keeping, and adjusting to school routine. Such activities limit the time available for lesson planning and no reading lesson is worth teaching unless it has been carefully prepared. Since the manual offers detailed preparation for each selection in the book it seems sensible to make use of it. The author has analyzed each story in order to provide the best means of introducing difficult concepts, to suggest techniques for developing word analysis and comprehension skills, and to list various activities which can be employed for extending learnings.

### Recent Reading Programs

Experimental studies by various school districts interested in the improvement of reading instruction have resulted in some distinctive methods. It would be imprudent for an individual teacher to adopt a new system wholesale into her classroom for a number of reasons. First, some techniques depend upon school-wide or city-wide acceptance for maximum efficiency. Second, special materials necessary for implementing the method may be unavailable. Third, some methods are still in the experimental stage and are not ready for adoption. Fourth, it is quite possible that a technique highly satisfactory for one locality may be unsuitable for another. However, certain excellent features of current methods may be

put into practice in any classroom.

Two plans which have been discussed during recent years are the Non-Oral Method and the New Castle Plan.

The Non-Oral Method of teaching reading was initiated by Dr. James E. McDade in the Chicago Public Schools. It has been reviewed many times and requires only brief description here. Advocates of the program point out that silent reading is often slowed to a sluggish rate by the necessity of the reader to associate the printed symbol with oral language before meaning can be attached to it. Dr. G. T. Buswell likens this process to the indirect method of learning languages where the foreign word must be associated with the vernacular word before any meaning can be established. In order to eliminate the resultant "inner subvocalization," *all oral reading* is postponed until third grade or until the non-oral technique is firmly fixed. There is much oral language work in preparation for silent reading, but it is done in a period apart from the reading lesson. After the silent reading, comprehension is checked through pantomime activities, responses to printed questions, carrying out of written (manuscript) directions, and other ingenious devices.

An important feature of the plan, and one which recommends itself strongly to any classroom teacher regardless of the method she is using, is the oral preparation for the reading activity. One cannot overemphasize the importance of the discussion during the readiness stage of a lesson for the concepts which it clarifies and

enriches. This aids comprehension of the reading which follows. The discussion serves another purpose: that of facilitating the recognition of words. An important aim of reading instruction is to develop independence in word recognition. Many pupils after having heard a word and having attached meaning to it can put into practice their word recognition skills when the word is met in print. Even those pupils who need assistance during the first silent reading will benefit from the auditory presentation and from the oral context which gives it meaning.

Mr. McCracken will present in the next issue of THE READING TEACHER an explanation of the plan in use at New Castle, Pennsylvania. An interesting and important feature of the plan is its emphasis on the visual approach to reading. Each lesson is initiated by attractive filmstrips which feature colored illustrations from the story and some text material.

### Visual Aids Have a Place

Visual and other sensory aids are invaluable for developing readiness for reading at all grade levels. Of course, actual experience is the ideal preparation, but when pupils begin to read about far away places and long ago some substitute for it must be found. At the present time the sound motion picture is probably the closest approach to reality that we possess. Most manuals suggest titles of sound films and film strips as well as recordings with names and addresses of distributing houses.

It is not advocated that sound

films and recordings be used for every lesson, since many stories can be readily comprehended through reference to the everyday experience of children. However, films can very effectively introduce a unit of stories. Most basal readers are divided into sections according to content, each section containing about ten stories. An entire period spent in discussion of the new topic and in viewing a film pertaining to it will pay dividends when the actual reading is begun. For example, pupils about to read a unit on South America will have better ideas concerning *bola*, *armadillo*, *pampas*, or *bombero* if they have seen these things. Likewise, children appreciate more readily the difficulties of jungle life if they can see and hear the heavy rains, swarms of buzzing insects, the howling of monkeys, and the harsh scream of birds.

Teachers sometimes ask, "If I have grouped my pupils for reading how can I show sound films to one group alone?" The entire class may enjoy and participate in the film showing although some groups will be doing it for different purposes. Since the content of most basal readers follows the social studies program to some extent, it is likely that the film for the group reading "at grade level" will contribute to the social studies unit in which the entire class is interested. If the film has no significance as far as curriculum content is concerned it has value in motivating language growth. It is suggested that after a sound film is shown it be re-viewed at least once without the sound track, allowing pupils to supply the narra-

tive. Besides giving the "reading group" opportunity to establish in their own speech the vocabulary of the original narrator, it also gives an opportunity to participate in an interesting and worthwhile oral language activity. The same device might be used for development of a directed listening activity. In the upper grades the film which serves as reading readiness for one group may be of

value to the whole group as a specific activity in critical thinking.

These are a few approaches to reading instruction. The one you will use will depend on a number of factors, chief of which will be those based on meeting the needs of your pupils best. The important question to keep in mind is, "With which approach, or combination of approaches, will I secure the best reading?"

## The Place of Phonics in Basal Reading Instruction

by JOSEPHINE TRONSBURG  
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"**H**IS SISTER can 'phonics' her way through any word, but Billy doesn't seem to know one sound from another" was the recent complaint of a mother whose son, aged ten years, was failing in reading.

The fact that many children are not reading as well as they should has caused educators, as well as parents, no little concern, and, in their efforts to improve reading instruction, their attention has been redirected towards the teaching of phonics as one of the ways in which a child can learn to attack new words independently.

A controversial issue for many years, the evidence from research in the past ten to fifteen years clearly indicates the value of teaching phonics. The issue is no longer whether phonics should be taught but rather "When shall instruction begin and how much? What techniques shall we use? How can we make phonics func-

tional?"

A better understanding of child psychology and child development in recent years has led us to the realization that we must take into account the growth stages in a child's life and provide him with certain skills accordingly.

Research indicates that a child must have a mental age of at least seven years before he can use phonics successfully. Since the average child is only six years of age mentally upon school entrance, he will not be ready for phonics until he enters second grade. This does not mean, however, that all phonics should be avoided until his second year in school. Much of the general reading readiness program is a readiness for phonics. Training in auditory discrimination and visual-auditory discrimination are very important phases of the reading readiness and pre-primer programs.

Many rhymes and jingles are used to sharpen auditory perception. At first, rhymes and jingles should be read to the child for enjoyment only. Later, his attention may be called to rhyming words and, finally, he is encouraged to make up rhymes and jingles.

### Is Child Ready for Phonics?

How can a teacher tell when a child has acquired the necessary readiness for phonics? He should be ready:

- a. If he can recognize similarities and differences in words he hears.
- b. If he can distinguish likenesses and differences in written words.
- c. If he can differentiate between the configuration of written words.
- d. If he has acquired the habit of reading for meanings in sentence, phrase or word wholes.
- e. If he has mastered a sight vocabulary large enough to give him a basis for generalizing about sounds.
- f. If he can use context clues effectively.
- g. If he reads rhythmically.
- h. If he can read to answer questions.
- i. If he has formed the habit of reading silently before reading orally.
- j. If he has developed a desire to read.
- k. If he has a mental age of at least seven years.

Learning to sound out new words is not a simple skill. It is a complex process made up of several different abilities. After a child has acquired audi-

tory and visual ability to differentiate between letter sounds, he must then learn to blend sounds before he can pronounce a word. Use of the word in context should always follow the analysis. Isolated word drills should not be used. Every time the word is seen in context it gives another meaning association and, therefore, another clue for remembering it.

The value of phonics depends to a great extent upon how it is introduced and taught. The child's initial experience with phonics is very important. If he is introduced to phonics before he is ready or if the teacher tends to go too fast in presenting the techniques, he may develop a dislike for phonics.

In introducing phonics, attention should be directed first to initial consonants. This will aid in establishing good left to right reading habits and prevent reversals. Also, the first part of root words tends to give better clues to words than the last part. Often the clue obtained from the initial letter in addition to the context clue makes further analysis unnecessary.

After a child has mastered the left to right sequence, attention should be directed to final consonants and then to medial sounds.

Consonant sounds are introduced before the vowel sounds because they are easier to hear and to learn. While the sound of some consonants varies, all vowels have more than one sound and are affected by accent. Consonants used alone will provide clues to words but vowels will not. When vowels are introduced, short vowels are presented before long vowels.

The sounds noted at the beginning

of a word should not be sounded in isolation. Instead the child should be asked, "Like what word does it begin?" With the exception of the context clue, some children will be able to pronounce the word without further help. For the others, the teacher should choose a similar word which is in the child's sight vocabulary and that looks like the new word except for the final consonants and call the child's attention to the fact that the new word begins like a word he knows and rhymes with another word he knows. Thus, through substitution of consonants, the child recognizes the new word. Some will be slow in acquiring this skill and the process may have to be repeated many times. They should recognize that parts of words which look alike also sound alike.

The teacher must have a thorough understanding of the basic sounds of the English Language otherwise she cannot do a good job of teaching phonics.

The trend in presenting the principles of phonetic analysis is to teach inductively rather than deductively. A child is given a number of words based on the fundamental principles of how sounds and their symbols function. These understandings develop as generalizations based on the child's experiences with words.

### **Phonics Have Limitations**

The teacher must be aware of the uses and limitations of phonics. They enable children to recognize many words by associating sounds with the proper letter symbols and then blending the sounds into a word. They are

more often used in conjunction with other word recognition techniques, namely context clues, picture clues, sight vocabulary, configuration or structural analysis, than alone. No one technique can be effectively used to recognize all words. Also, continual use of any one of these techniques would be very monotonous.

All children do not profit from a knowledge of phonics. Children with hearing defects cannot always discriminate between sounds. Others who acquire phonetic skills will use them ineffectually.

Practice in word analysis should include only those words which are in the child's hearing and speaking vocabulary. If the teacher overemphasizes phonics it may handicap the beginning reader because his attention should be on meaning.

The vocabulary used in the basal reading program is the factor which determines not only what phonics skills shall be taught but at which grade level they should be introduced.

The practice of following the teacher's manual in the presentation of phonetic sounds is desirable because then the phonics are directly tied in with the reading and the skills are learned in proper sequence.

Teachers' manuals accompany the various basal reading programs, which for the most part, present a simple, direct and well-integrated approach to phonics. Teachers are not expected to follow the manuals slavishly. The manuals, written by experts, suggest all the possible activities which may help the child to read more efficiently. The

*(Please turn to page 38)*

## Prevention of Reading Disabilities As a Basal Reading Problem

by A. STERL ARTLEY

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IT GOES without saying that emphasis in reading instruction should be on prevention of difficulties rather than on the correction of the difficulties after they occur—locking the barn *before* the horse is stolen, as it were. This statement should not be taken to mean that there should be no place in a modern reading program for remedial instruction, any more than it means that there should be no provision in medicine for first aid or emergency surgery. It does mean, however, that any program that fails to give primary attention to sound first teaching of reading is failing to meet its major responsibility.

The keystone of any program committed to the prevention of reading difficulties is the basal reading program. Basal reading is a two-sided coin. One side has to do with the promotion of growth *in* the skills, attitudes and abilities basic to reading as a process. The reverse side concerns itself with the promotion of growth *through* reading by providing the child with opportunities to experience richly and, as a result, grow personally through the medium of good story content.

Various approaches have been made to the organization of the basic reading program. One widely used approach is through the use of a series of basal readers which provide a comprehensive, sequential, and systematic

program of instruction. Another approach is through the avenue of experiences or activities with the skills and abilities of reading developed incidentally as needs arise. In between these two approaches are variations and combinations of either or both of the approaches mentioned above — the use of several sets of readers; the use of "co-basals;" experiences combined with certain aspects of systematic instruction; wide-reading, etc.

### Teacher Must Have Some Plan

It is not the writer's purpose here to argue the merits of any particular approach. He is saying, however, that the teacher must have *some* plan of basic reading instruction. Furthermore, it must be justifiable in the light of what we know about the way children grow, and it must be grounded in a sound psychology of reading. The remainder of this paper shall be concerned with an attempt to set up the qualities of a basal reading program which meets these criteria.

In the first place a sound reading program must take its direction from what is known about the normal processes of child growth and development. We know, for example, that children grow according to a sequential pattern in which each stage or sequence of growth is a readiness for the stage that follows. Thus, each stage of growth is both forward looking and

backward looking—forward, because it anticipates and predisposes future growth; backward, because it is a product of the development that precedes it.

Related to the basal reading program this means that the sequence of skills and abilities should be continuously unfolding. Hearing and enjoying stories read is a readiness for the actual process of learning to read. Reading pictures precedes the reading of printed text. Engaging in oral language prepares the child for reading and interpreting visual symbols. Reading stories with a simple plot anticipates the reading of longer stories with a plot based on several events. Thus, each growth gradient serves as a readiness for the one which follows.

We know, too, that though all children traverse the same spiral of development, the rate at which each child does so is an individual matter. Each youngster follows his own particular time-table of growth, and there is little the parent or the teacher may do to stretch or shrink him to make him fit any preconceived idea of what his growth should be. Consequently, the basal reading program must recognize and make provisions for the individual rates of growth. This means that the teacher must accept as natural and normal the wide variations in the level and rate of growth found among children in any group. Nothing would be more fallacious than to assume that all children will be ready for the pre-primer program on November 1, or that all will be ready to profit from instruction on short vowels at the beginning of the second grade, or that all

will be ready to build a two-level outline in the sixth grade.

### **Child Has Psychological as Well as Physical Needs**

We know the potency of basic needs in the life of the child. We know he needs food, rest, and adequate shelter if he is to grow normally physically. But researchers in the area of child growth and development have pointed out also that the child has psychological needs that are as basic as his physical ones. One of these is the need for status and recognition that grows out of successful achievement in those things that are culturally important.

Translated in terms of the reading program, this means that the instruction carried on must be so planned and organized that from the time we say "go" all children will progress successfully — day by day, month by month, level by level. There is nothing so deleterious to success in reading as well as to the development of sound mental health, as the knowledge that one is failing. Consequently, through provisions for differentiated instruction, each child should have the opportunity to succeed along with other members of his instructional group. Though his progress may not be as rapid as that of some of the others in his class, he is succeeding in terms of his own potential for growth. This kind of progress a basal reading program must insure.

At the same time that the basal reading program is rooted in the normal process of child growth, it must also make provision for the continuous and sequential development of read-

ing abilities. Such development is insured through a carefully planned sequence of goals to be achieved. There is no escaping the fact that learning to read involves the deliberate act of teaching and learning a series of skills, abilities, and understandings. Unlike the measles, they cannot be caught by exposure. They are taught and learned at their best when they are presented in a systematic, sequential manner.

### **Sequential Development of Reading Skills Necessary**

As a result the basal program should make provision for an orderly development of reading skills—skills of interpretation, word perception, and oral reading, to name only a few. These skills should be clearly defined for each instructional level. They should be introduced and taught at the time and at a rate consonant with each child's capacity for growth. The skill sequence should be known to the teacher. It should be listed conveniently for her use in the guidebook or course of study. No basal reading program deserves the modifying adjective, "sound," if it permits reading growth to take place in an opportunistic, careless, or hit-and-miss fashion.

A basal reading program designed to prevent reading failure must insure careful teaching of the directed reading lesson. Time was when the teaching of reading was assumed to be merely a process of listening to children read orally from pre-learned materials. Today we know that a reading lesson is a carefully structured process in which a trained teacher carries on a series of definite steps designed to pro-

mote growth in and through reading. These steps as outlined in the teacher's manual or guidebook provide first for the development of a readiness for reading the story. Vocabulary is carefully introduced; children's experiences are related to the content of the new story; concepts are clarified. This step is followed by the purposeful reading of the story—silent reading always preceding the oral process. Through the teacher's skilful questioning the children are helped to interpret the action of the story characters, to sense the imagery involved, to grasp main and supporting ideas and the like. Following this second step, the teacher provides for systematic skill-building activities, covering such activities as organizing ideas, classifying and generalizing, and understanding figurative language. This step also provides specific procedures for developing and strengthening word-attack skills. The last step of the lesson is one which gives children opportunities to explore and broaden interests related to the story he has just read. Many types of activities are integrated with the reading lesson—independent reading, art activities, puppetry, dramatic play, games, and the like. Truly a basal reading program of the type described is far-removed from an opportunistic program that depends upon the whims of the moment as a substitute for sound and systematic teaching.

### **Makes Provision for Vocabulary Control**

A basal program that promotes sound growth in reading makes provision for careful vocabulary control in

terms of both number of and rate at which words are introduced and taught. Even the slow-learner can acquire a reading vocabulary if words are introduced in number and at a rate no faster than he can assimilate them. Accordingly, a basal program that prevents reading difficulties should give most careful attention to such things as the number of words introduced in a given unit of work, repetitions of words for the purpose of mastery, and spacing the repetitions properly for maintenance. Plateau or assimilation units should be inserted at intervals to supply an opportunity to practice words already learned without an added load of new words. Additional book units should be included for the child who needs more than average practice on words for retention. No stone should be left unturned to insure success through a careful control of vocabulary.

A primary aim of the sound basal program should be that of developing independence in reading, particularly in the ability to perceive the sound and meaning of printed symbols. It is worse than folly to assume that the child can grow into maturity in reading by depending on sight words alone. As reading extends into content areas and into the broader areas of literature, the young reader needs to have at his command means by which he may unlock unfamiliar words. Otherwise he has to resort to one of two procedures — skipping the unfamiliar word, or asking an adult to pronounce it for him — both are inefficient or time consuming.

Likewise, it is equally fallacious to

assume that a child can grow into reading maturity by depending on any one perception technique to the exclusion of others — phonics is a good example. A basal program gives the child facility with a number of recognition techniques — meaning clues, word-form clues, structural clues, phonic clues, and the dictionary. Equipped in this manner the efficient reader has at hand several devices to unlock words, so that if one does not yield a meaningful word another is available. A sound basal reading program gives the reader several keys to hang on his key ring of independence.

#### **Developing Skills Is Not Enough**

But a basal reading program that gives attention to only the skills side of reading is one-sided. Though it may be productive of growth *in* reading, it ignores the reason reading is being taught in the first place—to enrich experience, to foster personal and social growth, to modify behavior. A basal program over-loaded on the skills side runs a real risk of promoting “highly efficient readers of comic books.” Regardless of how productive a basal program is in promoting growth in reading, it is grievously remiss in its responsibility if it leaves the child no richer than he was before, if it results in no change in attitudes and ways of thinking, if it leaves the child no better as an individual or as a member of the group to which he belongs.

Consequently, to promote growth *through* reading, the child needs an opportunity to project himself into story situations, to share the story

(Please turn to page 38)

## Vocabulary Control—More or Less?

by DONALD D. DURRELL  
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**H**OW CLOSELY should the teacher watch the difficulty of vocabulary in reading materials? Is it necessary or desirable to keep all supplementary readers and books in other subjects close to a "core" vocabulary? Or is it better that the child encounter a large number of new words daily, in the expectation that a wider exposure to new words will produce a richer vocabulary? Must we be content with adjusting materials to the child's rate of learning new words, or may we provide teaching which increases his rate of mastering such words? To these and other questions in regard to vocabulary control, we are beginning to find answers through research and practice.

It is obvious that there must be some vocabulary control in the teaching of reading. Regardless of the age of the reader, the presence of many difficult words in reading diminishes understanding and pleasure. The reader usually exercises his own "control" by discarding the book, and if he is not permitted to do so, by "turning off" his attention. Regardless of pleas to try harder and concentrate more, when too many different words get in the path of the reader, learning becomes difficult and sometimes impossible. Yet, if we try to ease the way of the child by selecting easier textbooks for him, we are accused of soft pedagogy and debasing standards.

Our aim in teaching reading is to increase the child's powers of acquir-

ing knowledge and pleasure through reading. How difficult may a book be if these ends are to be gained? Cooper (1) has recently provided evidence of progress in reading in relation to vocabulary load. He found a definite relationship between the difficulty of materials in reading and amount of progress made. Given two pupils of the same mental ability, the child whose reading was properly adjusted to his reading level made more progress than the child whose reading was too hard for him. In primary grades, children made greater gains in reading if they encountered not more than one difficult word in twenty running words. When the burden was as great as one difficult word in ten, almost no progress was made. Children in intermediate grades were able to take a slightly harder vocabulary load, but here too, progress was clearly impeded when the load became too heavy. Regardless of the accusation of soft pedagogy, it is apparent that we must keep the vocabulary load within bounds if rapid achievement is to result.

### Adjusting Materials to Reader

In adjusting the book to the child, there seems to be no better way than to listen to his oral reading and to count the number of words he finds difficult. Grouping for instruction in reading in primary grades is best done by this method. The same method may be used in intermediate grades, but

here it is important to check word meanings even though the child may pronounce all words easily. Testing the child in the book being used and observing the suitability of that book for his reading ability is highly important. It will result in more suitable instructional planning than grouping through standard test results. However, as in all testing, nothing is accomplished for the child until suitable adjustment of material is made. It is of little consequence that children are put into small groups for instruction on the basis of such tests unless materials of the right level are provided for them. Certainly this is the job of the teacher alone. No publisher can assure the adjustment automatically, and no reading system can provide adequate practice for the slow learners. If it seems impossible to obtain books of a suitable level, supplementary word practice must be given and the pace slowed to meet the word mastery problem.

The amount and type of supplementary practice will vary with different groups of children. In primary grades where we find the best adjustment to reading levels, with primers being used in third grade if the reading level of the group requires it, much attention is given to the introduction of new words in reading. Words are taught singly and in phrases through flash cards, blackboard work, work sheets, and various kinds of games. The main task here, of course, is to enable the child to read words already in his speaking vocabulary. The fact that the child knows the meaning of the words often leads the teacher to

give word practice almost exclusively of the type in which the child responds to the "name" of the word. There is evidence that a sight vocabulary is built faster when the child responds to the meaning of the word. In the initial presentations of the word, the name is emphasized, but in subsequent practice and review it is better that the meaning be responded to. For example, if the word *shoe* is shown, the teacher's question might be, "Would you like this for dinner?" or "Would you buy this in a grocery store or a clothing store?" When the children respond they can justify their answer by saying, "Because it's a shoe, and you wouldn't want a shoe for dinner." Word classification exercises of many sorts, flash cards which require action responses, context clue exercises, multi-meaning games, and matching of words with pictures, are some of the methods of assuring response to meaning of words. In a recent review of games and devices for sight vocabulary practice it was found that almost all required only response to the name of the word. Better results will be obtained when these are replaced by exercises which require response to meaning.

### **Need of Control in All Reading Areas**

In intermediate grades, current practice appears to be much more retarded in adjusting to the child's vocabulary needs. While some teachers provide second grade books for fifth graders who need them, the lack of suitable content in such readers is a deterrent to better adjustment of read-

ing materials. Instruction in social studies and science, more often than not, is in books of a single level for all pupils. While the introduction of multiple texts with the same content but different levels of reading might be helpful, the teacher must make some adjustment to the materials she now has. If the vocabulary of the books in social studies and science is completely beyond the reading ability of certain children, the best method is to read the books aloud to this group, adjusting or explaining the vocabulary at the time. If the content of the books is important, reading difficulties should not be allowed to bar the child from that information. Groups of children who are more nearly capable of reading the books may need only some oral practice with the names and meanings of the words they are to encounter in the lessons. After such practice, these children should be provided with a glossary to help them in their silent study. Some children may need the glossary only. While the use of the dictionary is recommended, few children will consult it many times in a single lesson. It is well known that many children are not aware of their difficulties with words and find no reason for consulting the dictionary. A glossary for each lesson will call special attention to the new words and will enable the child to pursue the ideas without prolonged interruption.

Although many basal reading systems are sold on the basis of continuing vocabulary control from one reader to the next, actually strict vocabulary control is lost after the pre-primer. Despite the desirable care taken in

the introduction of new words in primary grade readers, the child is by no means limited to the words of those readers. Supplementary reading in other textbooks and library books is introduced at the primer level and thereafter. In most first grades, the child is exposed to enough new words at the primer level that he is as able to shift to a new basal reader as he is to continue in the original basal system. We have a number of studies which confirm this point. There is no need to adopt the same basal system through several grades on the basis of vocabulary control.

#### **Help Child Solve Own Vocabulary Problems**

Since we cannot control the vocabulary of all the child's reading, it is highly important that we help him to adjust to the vocabulary he encounters. The child must, sooner or later, acquire the habits of meeting his own vocabulary problems. The vocabulary control we must seek is the child's control of new vocabulary. All research evidence shows that we can increase greatly the child's control of the new words he encounters. Adjusting the vocabulary to the child is only part of the story; adjusting the child to the vocabulary problems of reading is equally important. It is regrettable that there has been so much confusion and controversy about the value of word analysis in the teaching of reading.

#### **Instruction in Word Analysis**

Instruction in word analysis abilities should begin in the first week of the first grade, or even in kindergarten.

Lack of "reading readiness" is mainly the lack of two things: a knowledge of letter names or forms, and the ability to notice separate sounds in spoken words. If the child does not see the difference in the visual form of letters and words, there is no point in teaching him the name of a word since he will not recognize it when he sees it again. If he does not notice the separate sounds in spoken words, or relate them to the printed letters, there is no sense to the spelling of the words. Inability in auditory and visual perception of word elements always results in a low learning rate in first grade, regardless of the intelligence of the pupil. Such a child will have no "vocabulary control." Fortunately, the knowledge of letter names and the ability to hear sounds in spoken words are both relatively easy to teach in first grade or even in kindergarten, so that there is an immediate practical approach for the teacher who discovers that children in the first grade are not remembering the words taught. In the first week of school the teacher will discover her potential non-readers by testing the ability to match letters and ability to notice separate sounds in spoken words. This is the time to begin providing the child with the perceptual abilities which enable him to remember new words and to solve new words. The wide-spread misinformation about "wait until the child is ready" probably is the greatest single cause of reading disability. Reading readiness is not a mysterious glow that descends upon a child; it is a series of specific perceptual abilities which can be given by direct teaching. The odd idea that

emotional difficulties arise from such teaching has no basis in fact. Research would probably show that children who are taught the names of letters and the sounds of letters in words during kindergarten and first grade are freer from emotional difficulties relating to reading than children not so taught.

### **Teach Sounds and Blends**

To phonic or not to phonic? If by phonics we mean teaching the child the sound of letters, blends, and phonograms, the answer to the question seems to be an emphatic "Yes!" Sister Mary James (2) has provided recent evidence on the value of phonics. She measured the reading ability of five hundred children at the end of the second grade, and also measured their mental age (Otis Quick Scoring), their ear for sounds in spoken words, their visual memory of word form, and their ability to give sounds of letters and blends. All tests had high reliability coefficients. This data enabled her to study the influence of each ability on reading independent of the other factors. She paired children so that they were equal for three variables, but were more than a standard deviation apart on the fourth variable. If a variable had no influence on reading, the children who made higher scores on that variable should not have a superior sight vocabulary in reading. All variables were found to be important to reading. They made the following differences on mean score on sight vocabulary: phonics, 33 words; visual memory of words, 32 words; auditory perception of separate sounds of

words, 18 words; mental age, 3 words. The low influence of mental age on reading is particularly interesting in view of the fact that there was a difference of 18 months of mental age between the children in the 106 pairs matched for other variables. Partial correlation techniques confirmed the findings. It appears that even though one teaches auditory and visual discrimination abilities in words, it is still very important to teach the sounds of letters and blends. It also appears that we must revise our concepts of the significance of mental ability in relation to reading readiness.

#### **Teach Word Analysis In Middle Grades**

How about word analysis abilities in the intermediate grades? Will specific phonics instruction enable them to have better control of new words encountered in reading and spelling? Here again, we have recent evidence showing the value of specific word analysis training. Russell (3) provided six hundred children in grades four, five, and six, with thirty lessons in word analysis, including attention to sounds in words, visual memory of word form, and analysis by syllables. These children were compared with an equated group of six hundred children who were taught reading and spelling by the usual methods. Her concern was primarily for the effect of such training on spelling, but she also meas-

ured ability in word pronunciation. The thirty lessons, replacing spelling instruction three days a week for a period of three months, produced ten months gain in spelling in grade four, and six months spelling gain in grades five and six. Control groups made slightly over two months gain on the same tests. Children receiving the instruction were also clearly superior in ability to pronounce new words in reading. It is interesting to note that on the words taught in spelling during the experiment, the children who had three days of word analysis plus two days of spelling each week did better three months later on those words than did the pupils who had five days a week of regular spelling instruction.

To return to our original question—vocabulary control—more or less?—the answer seems to be two-fold. We must adjust the materials to the child's reading ability, but at the same time we must teach word analysis abilities which give the child greater control over new words taught.

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## **The Child and His Basic Reading Materials**

by GERTRUDE WHIPPLE

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**T**ODAY the good teacher organizes reading instruction as part of a larger program in communication. In selecting reading materials for her pupils, she considers the value of the material not only in teaching reading but also in promoting the child's growth in other aspects of language such as speaking, listening, and writing. In view of this somewhat new organization of reading in the classroom, it is timely to ask: What points should be considered in selecting basic reading materials?

### **The Program to Be Implemented**

To introduce this problem, let us look briefly at the nature of the integrated language arts program. In such a program the teacher blends the language arts through projects involving a variety of activities. Examples are dramatizations, radio presentations, school festivals, original movies, construction and art work, written explanations of table and wall exhibits, and frequent conversations, discussions, and reports. In initiating the language activities, the teacher begins with a setting involving normal communication, usually some form of experience, firsthand or otherwise, accompanied by oral language. In this setting, purposes for reading are developed. If the children are not versed in the neces-

sary reading skills, these are singled out for definite instruction or practice. Afterwards, effort is made to see that the children use them in the situations in which they are needed. No definite pattern is followed from day to day, but much depends on the insight of the teacher.

Such procedure in teaching reading differs radically from that widely used in the past, and still seen in some classrooms today. Reading was taught in a separate period. There was much drill on reading skills, but little explicit attention to the child's need for these skills in other situations. As a result, for most children the skills taught had little meaning or value. The children did not use these skills in their daily activities. Needless to say, in separate subject-teaching, reading materials were often selected and used with slight regard for the broad objectives of the curriculum.

### **Varied Types of Materials Are Necessary**

To satisfy the child's needs for books in a modern communication program, the good teacher seeks a variety of materials adapted for use in language activities. She wants materials especially designed to promote essential skills in receiving ideas from the printed page, skills which the ex-

panding daily needs of her children prepare them to learn. Reading textbooks are useful in developing many of these skills. Other skills, however, such as the use of the index or of reference books or the reading of a newspaper can seldom be taught, even initially, through the use of a basic reader. So she needs supplementary materials suitable for such skill development. She needs also a variety of books to satisfy the different purposes for reading that arise in the language projects. She wants materials on many different topics and materials with different types of content such as realistic and fanciful, historical and modern, and prose and poetry. Especially does she need artistically written materials for merging basic reading and literature.

To be specific, in the primary grades classes require several kinds of reading materials: sets and single copies of basic series of readers, fitted to the reading abilities of the different groups within the class, readers that supplement the basic readers; booklets on particular topics such as Christmas or the great outdoors; script-text stories, directions, poems, and the like prepared by the teacher and children; periodicals such as *Wee Wisdom*, *Jack and Jill*, and *Children's Activities*; picture books; simple, well-written informational books about various topics, for example, cooking, pets, wild animals, Indians, and Eskimos; and old and new fiction and poetry.

For the upper grades, the following ought to be used in the teaching of reading: basic readers; informational books such as biographies, books

about animals, trees, ships, communication, and volcanoes, to mention a few topics; fiction—regional, historical, intergroup—sports stories, science, etc.; poetry; periodicals; reference books such as dictionaries, atlases and children's encyclopedias; and class-developed materials.

At every grade level materials for remedial reading instruction are needed for pupils who are not reading up to their capacities. To the extent that we can provide such pupils with fresh, novel materials of special interest to them, our remedial efforts are likely to succeed.

Reference to basic readers immediately brings up problems relating to their distribution to classrooms. In the past classrooms have sometimes received a copy per pupil of a single basic reader. However excellent the reader may be, it cannot satisfy the widely varying abilities and needs represented in a classroom. A teacher requires several basic readers if she is to reach all the pupils. In the case of each book she needs only enough copies for a group of children.

#### **Sufficiency of Materials Is Needed**

An ample supply of reading materials is fully as important as a variety of them. For each group there must be plenty of core materials around which to center the language activities. There must also be a wealth of supplementary and library materials, because it is largely through the pursuit of independent reading that children perfect their reading skills and come to read habitually.

Administrators, supervisors, and

teachers can do much to equip classrooms with enough suitable reading materials. Perhaps first, books that fall short of generally accepted standards should be removed from the classroom even though they are in good physical condition. Then school officials and teachers can see the number of books that are really active—that are not outmoded, that conform in style of writing, in physical make-up and in ideas, social concepts, and the like to the findings of recent research in reading.

Next, school officials and teachers may well consider their book budgets. As the prices of books have steadily increased, have there been corresponding increases in budgets for the purchase of books? As the needs for reading materials have become greater with the changing nature of the program, has there been a steady increase in the amount of up-to-date material placed at the disposal of the teacher and pupils? Also, how does the quantity of reading material on hand in the classrooms compare with that furnished in liberally supplied rooms? According to the recommendations of experts, only the most liberally supplied schools have a sufficient number of books today.

Of course, the teachers ought to utilize every available source of books such as circulating collections within the school or school system, public and school libraries, county or state libraries, and organizations such as the National Dairy Council or the Association of American Railroads.

### **Coordination of Textbooks**

In an integrated language-arts program classrooms are often equipped with spellers and language textbooks as well as with reading textbooks. The teacher's problem is simplified when these texts tie in logically with the content of the class units. If she can build good units around these and her other reading materials, she can easily fit in the teaching of the specific skills, yet direct the learning toward realistic child purposes.

All three types of textbooks need to be geared to the reading abilities of the children who are to use them. If a fourth-grade pupil is given a reader of second-grade reading difficulty because of his limited reading ability, his other books also should be at that reading level. In word forms, meaning vocabulary, and the introduction of new concepts, they should be fitted to him.

### **Inherent Value of Content**

Basic reading materials that are to be used not only for reading but for promoting ability in writing, speaking, and listening must have inherent worth. For example, the books must supply accurate and valuable information, must encourage desirable appreciations, must bestow pleasure, or make some other definite contribution. They must make an appeal to the child's interests, perhaps through suspense, surprise, humor, climax, and satisfactory conclusion. Then, too, the selections should set good models of writing for the child, so that the teacher may use them in promoting good

paragraph organization or the use of vocabulary that creates word pictures or skill in other aspects of written expression.

"Oh," but the reader says, "Do not most books meet such a criterion? Do not all basic readers contain well-written selections?" The answer is *No*. Even a cursory inspection and comparison of various readers with these points in mind show that some series are vastly superior to other series.

### **Ease of Comprehension**

The reading materials provided, including the basic readers, should be varied in difficulty to meet the range of reading abilities represented in the class. Ordinarily this range is five years or more. Materials to be suitable then must show a range of difficulty that is equally wide. The teacher can organize the materials about themes that appeal to the children such as tales of old, aviation, wild animals, great Americans, and communication. While the language unit may be similar for all the children, those in a group at a given time will pursue the reading of those materials that they can comprehend and interpret without undue difficulty.

### **Sequential Development of Skills**

In an integrated program, reading is used to serve the immediate needs of the children in their school activities. The teacher is aware, however, of the important skills that should be emphasized in basic instruction in reading. She endeavors to begin where the child is and to provide a continuous program, maintaining his

present reading skills, applying them to more difficult reading materials, and teaching new skills as the need for them arises. Probably no skill is developed completely at any one time. Rather the teacher furnishes guidance at every stage of development.

Thus, besides fitting the books to the children, the good teacher selects books that will aid in developing important reading skills. For example, if the children are to learn how to divide selections into their large thought divisions, the teacher will need basic reader selections that are well organized and that fall naturally into sections. If she is to prepare for dictionary work by teaching the use of the glossary, she will do well to choose readers that contain good glossaries. If she is to lay the foundation for good study habits in the content fields, she will need basic readers that include expository as well as narrative selections.

The lists of skills that publishers supply in their teaching manuals will undoubtedly assist in insuring a continuous skill program. But inasmuch as an integrated language-arts program is often set up independent of any single text or group of texts, the teachers of a school may wish to define the skills to be taught and the general order of developing them. They may utilize publisher's lists and curriculum guides in their school systems.

### **Leading-on-ness**

Of course, the whole purpose of teaching reading in our schools is to establish reading as a factor in the child's life. He must come to use read-

ing as a means of satisfying his daily needs for information, an aid in stimulating and guiding his thinking, a help in solving his problems, and a method of enjoying leisure, developing new interests, and deriving spiritual and aesthetic satisfaction. The schoolbook is merely a device to lead the child by easy steps to the world of books that can meet these needs. Therefore, a schoolbook, and specifically a basic reader, ought to lead the child to explore the broader field of books.

Good basic readers introduce new authors and characters to the child, foster interest in various literary types, present challenging themes and lively plots, and encourage reading for new purposes. So the teacher selects books with these ends in mind, and utilizes these characteristics of the materials in encouraging the children to venture further into the book world.

### Alluring Illustrations

Verbal text is not the only important feature in teaching reading. In this age of dynamic visual teaching, the quality and quantity of the illustrations in a book, influence its instructional value almost as much as does the textual matter. If the illustrations make a lively appeal to the children, the teacher may use them in building motives for reading the accompanying text.

Illustrations in basic readers have merit to the extent that they:

1. Have a definite center of inter-

est that draws the eye to a particular point.

2. Depict interesting action.
3. Use several colors.
4. Cover a large area.
5. Are numerous, but not so numerous as to reduce seriously the amount of reading matter.
6. Deal with eventful topics.
7. Accord with the verbal text, thereby aiding in its interpretation.

### Careful Selection Needed

The foregoing discussion shows that the reading materials must be carefully selected. This is true in spite of the fact that most schoolbooks today make favorable first impressions. Objective studies comparing books of the same type in particular respects show that it is entirely erroneous to assume that they are equally good. For example, the writer in studying the illustrations in six fourth-grade readers learned that one book was far superior to all the others in its appeal to children, that in one book the proportion of the illustrations which attracted boys was much greater than the proportion which attracted girls, and that in another book, this situation was reversed.

Without definite and careful evaluation of books before purchasing them, even the best teachers will be handicapped in using the materials to promote the child's growth in language powers.

## Appraisal of Growth in Reading

by MILES A. TINKER

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**A**PPRAISAL OF GROWTH in reading is an essential aspect of the basal instructional program. It involves an initial careful evaluation of reading abilities at the beginning of the school year, and then again at subsequent periods as the sequence of instruction progresses. Knowledge of just where each child stands in reading proficiency will yield information necessary for effective organization of the reading program to achieve reading goals in any grade. Furthermore, a thorough-going program of appraisal makes it possible for the teacher to ascertain the degree to which reading objectives have been achieved, and to organize the teaching program itself so as to meet individual needs. This evaluation information is derived from standardized reading test scores plus the day-by-day informal tests, checks and observations which the teacher makes.

Standardized tests are measuring devices which furnish norms or standards of achievement for a specific series of school grades. Ordinarily they can be given, scored, and the scores interpreted by the teacher. When a standardized test is given, it is possible through reference to the norms to ascertain the grade level of achievement of a pupil. For any given pupil the strengths or weaknesses are revealed in word recognition, vocabulary meaning, reading for details, speed of comprehension and the other

aspects of reading performance when appropriate tests are employed. The teacher should understand that norms for a particular test represent average performance. Some deviation from average performance can be expected by many pupils.

### Use of Survey Tests

The survey type of standardized test is employed to discover the level of proficiency at which a child can read. And progress in proficiency is determined by an appraisal of growth from initial to subsequent measurements made at periodic intervals. Survey tests ordinarily contain measurements of word meanings and comprehension of sentences, or both. In addition some of these tests measure speed of reading. There are many survey tests available. Lists of reading tests together with a detailed program of appraisal are given by Tinker.\* Most survey tests give in the norms the reading grade equivalent of each score obtained on the test. Examination of the grade scores will reveal whether a pupil is below, at, or above the grade level at which he is located. Thus, if a child half way through the third grade (3.5 grade location) obtains a reading grade score of 3.9, he is 0.4 of a grade above the average. This kind of information is a valuable aid to the teacher in getting better ac-

\*Miles A. Tinker, *Teaching Elementary Reading*. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1952, 283-317.

quainted with the class, and in organizing instructional procedures to take care of the different levels of reading proficiency. It is an aid also in identifying pupils in need of a more thorough diagnosis to ascertain kinds and degrees of retardation in reading. Thus a child of average learning ability, who when starting the fourth grade obtains a reading grade of 3.0, is retarded one year in reading. Such a child should be referred to a remedial teacher for diagnosis and remedial instruction.

Use of survey tests provide information on the reading grade level of each pupil together with the range of reading ability in the class. Of equal importance are those aspects of appraisal necessary for promoting best adjustment of instruction to individual needs. Such appraisal involves ascertaining the level of proficiency attained by each child in each specific skill as it is being taught. A teacher is then able to adjust her instruction so that the child progresses step by step in gaining those proficiencies requisite for natural progress to successive levels in the basal reading program. This kind of adjustment requires the more or less constant day-by-day appraisals associated with the teaching of reading. These appraisals include use of informal reading tests, teacher observation, questionnaires and record keeping.

To obtain a satisfactory picture of the pattern of reading development of each child, appraisal of growth in each of the main areas is necessary. A child may be high in one area, at grade or average in another, and low in some

other one. The level of reading proficiency tends to vary from area to area. The main areas of reading may be listed as follows: word recognition, vocabulary meanings, comprehension, rate of reading, study skills, special silent reading skills, oral reading, and interests and tastes.

### Use of Informal Reading Tests

Workbook tests and teacher-made tests are the more common forms of *informal reading tests*. Word recognition, vocabulary meanings, and comprehension are usually measured in workbook tests. Additional informal testing is necessary for more complete and hence more satisfactory appraisal of progress in what is being taught. This is achieved by use of teacher-made tests. The items in these tests are in form ordinarily like those in workbooks and in standardized tests. Teacher manuals which accompany basal series of readers usually provide sample items and directions for their construction.

Teacher-made tests are constructed to determine how well the pupils are acquiring what is being taught at the time. They are, therefore, appropriate for measuring daily, weekly or monthly progress in reading. Furthermore, they are more satisfactory than standardized tests for this purpose. The results obtained are an essential guide for adjusting instruction to the strengths and weaknesses of the pupils.

Information useful for guidance in reading instruction also may be obtained from an informal oral reading test. A carefully graded series of basal readers should be employed. The book

of the series of readers in which the child can accurately pronounce 19 out of 20 words with at least 75 per cent comprehension indicates reading at the instructional level for that child. This instructional level can be fairly accurately ascertained at half-grade intervals. Thus, if performance is satisfactory in the beginning of Book Three, the level is grade 3.0. But if it is satisfactory slightly beyond the middle of Book Three, the instructional level is at grade 3.5. To secure additional information, the pupil is asked to read orally material somewhat more difficult than his instructional level. A detailed record of errors plus notes on behavior during the reading are made. Analysis of the errors and the child's behavior during the reading will reveal the degree of proficiency in use of verbal context, word analysis skills, word-form clues and phrasing. In general, the teacher will find the oral reading technique one of the most useful forms of appraisal of progress in basal reading.

*Teacher observation* of pupil behavior and pupil responses in the day-by-day reading situation provides another aid to appraisal of growth in reading. This direct study of the children is especially useful for exploring reading attitudes, interests, tastes and the use of study skills.

*Questionnaires* may also be used to advantage as an aid in appraising attitudes, interests and the behavior patterns related to pupil adjustment to the reading situation. Brief teacher-made questionnaires ordinarily provide information which is more helpful for guidance purposes in the in-

structional program than the standardized published questionnaires. The former can be specifically related to current aspects of reading instruction. At one time or another such questionnaires can yield information on pupil attitudes toward school, reading, the teacher, or other children; on the personal and social adjustment of the child; on leisure time reading activities; and on preferred recreational activities.

### **Record Keeping Is Essential**

Satisfactory appraisal of a pupil's progress in the basal reading program requires *record keeping*. An anecdotal record involves notations on significant aspects of informal observation of a child's behavior in the reading situation. An example is "John still fails to make proper use of verbal context for word recognition." The cumulative record is made up of various data on a child, accumulated in usable form. The latter would include data on health, standardized and informal tests, school achievement, summaries of anecdotal records, etc.

Appraisal of growth in the basal reading program should be concerned primarily with accumulation of data which will facilitate adjustment of instruction to pupil needs. At one time or another, all the techniques discussed above will be employed. Success of an appraisal program depends (1) upon collection of data by proper methods, and (2) upon the use to which the data is put. Mere collection of appraisal data is not enough. They should be employed in an appropriate manner in adjusting instruction to

pupil needs. Furthermore, it is not wise to emphasize a single technique of appraisal as most important. One technique may be more important for one purpose, another technique for another purpose. In general it would appear that appraisal of the total pattern of growth in basal reading is best achieved by coordinating the information from all sources of evaluation.

### Phonics

*(Continued from page 20)*

teacher should select only those activities which fit in with the needs of her children.

Many teachers think that the teaching of phonics is the concern of the primary teachers only. They fail to take into consideration that, although these skills have been taught they may not have been learned by all the children in these lower grades. Phonic instruction should be continued throughout the intermediate grades for those children who have not mastered all the skills and also as an aid in developing facility in using the dictionary and in syllabifying polysyllabic words.

Since they have so many uses, let's help more children to "phonics" their way through a word as Billy's mother expresses it but let's also think of phonics as a tool rather than a method of teaching children to read. It is a means rather than an end in itself.

Phonics instruction should be used along with other means of word attack for quick and accurate recognition of words.

### Reading Disabilities

*(Continued from page 24)*

characters' moods and emotions, and to create sensory images so vivid that responding to printed words becomes in reality a process of experiencing. Thus the young reader takes away from the story, as he would from a first-hand experience, new understandings that become a part of his life—understandings that he may use to guide his actions and solve his problems. Through the medium of good books, doors are opened to wide vistas. The young reader is transported to other places and other times. There is no limit to where he may go, what he may do, whom he may meet.

To achieve this goal of growth through reading, children need materials that are in keeping with their present and their potential interests. They need materials rich in concepts and broadening in scope. Above all, they need the skilful guidance of a teacher who understands both the reading process and the development of children if reading is to serve its highest purpose—that of making children better, richer persons because of what they have experienced through the medium of the printed page.

## What Is Basic in Reading Instruction?

by ALVINA TREUT BURROWS  
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TEACHERS, parents, publishers, and textbook authors are all concerned about this question. And properly so, for our children in school spend many hours learning to read. Taxpayers spend many dollars for textbooks. Publishers and authors spend vast sums of money and unending time in the preparation. Hence, the most searching questions about their basic qualities are in order, not for the purpose of deriding them nor of fixing blame either on textbook producers or upon school people who use or misuse them. The purpose of this questioning and discussion of basic aims and values of reading instruction is to clarify only one aspect of the problem of what is basic to reading instruction in America.

Current questions cover a range of controversy: Do so-called basal readers teach skills basic to all reading? Are there some skills truly basic, and if so, precisely what are they? If there is a body of identifiable reading skills, do basal readers teach them? Can they teach them to all children of normal or better intelligence? Does a rigidly controlled vocabulary impair reading growth for many children? How much control of vocabulary is really necessary and at what stages? Does the word *basal* signify a content constituting a basic American heritage? If so, what aspects of American life, and of American life in world society, do they present? With what moral and

spiritual values are readers concerned? Do reading texts aim at enhancing individual differences in a social structure which blends cooperation and competition?

Many minds in many places may well be occupied with redefining the terms basal reading instruction in the next decade. As the term *literacy* has burgeoned beyond its first constricted meaning so, too, will our reading programs and books have to face new tests of basic intent and of efficiency. New designs rather than patchwork repair may well be necessary. To wrestle with this long range problem singlehanded here and now would be foolhardy. The immediate task is that of examining the relation of reading instruction to the basic American concept of individual rights.

### Basal Reading and Individual Differences

Present public concern over conformity in content and methods of instruction is well founded. Impatience mounts with lock-step systems. Particularly is current scrutiny focussed upon intellectual wastage by pupils of superior talent. The challenge of individual instruction has now been taken up by an interested public. It has long been the accepted challenge of an educational vanguard. And right here is the Achilles heel of basal systems as presently conceived. Both as to method and structure is this true.

Books and procedures both need to be attuned to the American concept that it is normal to be unique. Reading programs must take notice that individuals differ as to *how* they learn as well as *what* they learn from any common experience. And this must be done without stigma or smugness for the learners.

It is assumed for purposes of this article that one aim of basic instruction is to teach the beginning of the art of reading. The fulfillment of this beginning rests, in part, upon the eventual maturity of the adult. In view of the tremendous differences among school children even this beginning is no small task. It is presently confused by hangovers in educational procedure. These residual practices are based upon assumptions of uniformity of learners.

If the American hypothesis of freedom of speech and of assembly apply to learning, then beginners, too, have some rights of choice. Teachers have long known that children read best what they like best. Educators have spent much attention upon children's identification with characters in both their real and their story book worlds. Beginners in the art of reading need to have available a great variety of story content and story style so that they can find those characters, human and animal, old and young, rich and poor, gay and sad, wise and stupid, through whom they can find themselves in print. This is a basic human experience in reading. It can happen by choice but not by coercion. Sameness of character and style, will not suffice for all children of the people.

Uniformity of content implies philosophical dangers as well as the practical classroom difficulty of maintaining interest. It implies a single pattern of life rather than the glorious diversity of life which is America. The fallacy of a single economic or social stereotype so often found in beginning readers needs serious scrutiny by theoreticians as well as by practical school people who have the daily urgency of children's interests to deal with.

#### **Individual Selection in the Out-of-School World**

In the apparently simple choice of which of several books to begin to learn to read the beginner is acting upon good example. In a world of abundant print selection and rejection of what to read is a daily commonplace. Even the very young observe this rejection by adults at home, at the newsstand, the public library, at the family TV. Five and six year olds turn on at will the radio or TV programs they want to see or hear. With equal vigor they turn off what they do not want to hear or see. Entertainment is no longer a rarity but a commonplace. Even when a member of a captive audience in a teacher assigned group this act of selection or rejection works. Attentive books need fool no one. Now as never before, children select what they will attend to. This is as basic a fact of communication as any to be reckoned with. Hence instructional programs in communication by reading, must offer more varied fictional and factual content,

more variations in simplicity and difficulty to meet this challenge of selection and identification. They must help teachers provide more ways for individuals to make choices since choice-making is essential, too, in reading as in other phases of democratic life.

Teachers want help also in abandoning the common practices of three ability groups goose-stepping their way through reading materials in a hierarchy of adult-determined difficulty. Teachers are increasingly sensitive to the resistance to learning thus engendered. They are acutely aware of the range of personality and instructional needs within the most carefully limited homogeneous class subdivision. They are asking, and asking insistently, as are parents also, how can individuals be taught as individuals? What kinds of grouping make sense? Should all instruction be individual? What kinds of learning are enhanced by working with others?

It is here that another truth needs to be noted in a program of basic reading instruction. Individuals do not make a group by virtue of adjacent scores on a test scale. They do not make a group by virtue of adjacent seating in a reading circle. Our parent thirteen colonies eventually became a group through the solution of common problems sensed by those persons who volunteered to make themselves a body politic. Common need or common interest are galvanizing forces in any organic grouping. A third force is that of personal interaction. We choose to be with certain people and to take on some of their attitudes,

interests, and habits. It is proposed here that these psychological bases spontaneous of grouping operate in juvenile learning groups as well as in social groups, business groups, professional groups or philanthropic groups. It is further proposed that the factor of choice of what to learn to read and with whom to be associated in the learning are important in successful achievement. In a program of basic reading instruction this aspect of democratic method needs courageous exploration and careful reporting.

#### **Individual Selection in the Classroom**

In daily classroom practice these facts of choice translate into fairly clear terms. Many fairly self-directive activities must be available so that the teacher can be freed for some individual teaching in the classroom daily. All individuals need some chance to work with their teacher in the course of a week or two, not just "retarded" learners. A rich array of material, magazines and newspapers, trade and textbooks, must be available. Perhaps a minimum of five books per child is requisite if choice is to operate at all and ten books per child would be better. Here, too, is an area which beckons for research. How much material is needed by a group of active readers to constitute for them a literate environment?

Individuals may choose to read as individuals. They may at times choose to read as groups or as partners. They may choose to work in a small group for a common purpose, such as making

a movie of a chosen story, or preparing a panel discussion on the pros and cons of fluoridation, or of practicing a quiz program on soil conservation. At the primary level the choice may be, "Who wants to read with Susie?" "Who wants to read with Mary?" "With Johnnie?" At times the beginner may be asked, "Do you want to read a book about picking apples or one about two little black dogs?" Often the choice is both what and with whom. The teacher may say, "Jack and I are reading a book about a goldfish family having a picnic. We could have two more people read with us. Who would like to?"

With many opportunities for self-directed and self-assignment children can accept teacher-assignment with little or no resistance when blind spots occur. Such assignments for practice of a particular skill, such as skimming to locate dates or amounts, or re-reading to go faster, are often welcomed. Groups or even a whole class often enter vigorously into a series of short intensive practice sessions when they understand their needs. When the reasonable goal has been well attained and satisfaction savored then other reading pursuits are taken up again.

Where children make choices from the beginning of their school days the constant unfolding of reading experience is sufficiently satisfying to spur children on to wider and wiser reading as maturity permits. Where such choices have not been experienced transitions must be gradual. Rebuilding of interests and changing of attitude is a long and often difficult process. To replace negative feelings about

reading with positive ones requires subtle treatment. It may well take six to ten months to get a healthy nucleus of active readers propelling themselves forward into the world of books. But this initiative in reading is exactly what must be striven for. Releasing active readers who want to read from some class assignments, sharing their enthusiasms with the class as a whole, bringing many books into the class and talking about them informally are some of the techniques by which this contagious feeling for reading may be spread to others. Merely announcing a change of policy will not accomplish such a change but planned opportunities do bring about different reading behavior in many schools for many children.

### **Skills in a Basic Reading Program**

Along with the basic issues of individual differences and the right to make choices is also the time honored problem of learning skills in reading. A sound program of word study is basic in learning to read and can be effectively harmonized with individual or group choice of content. There is no certain selection of words which must be analyzed in order to read English. Initial consonants, common blends and structures, can be found in practically any content. Nor should they be overlooked.

Comprehension abilities must be nurtured through varying responses to a range of reading content. Children whose reading interests are fanned by challenging activities and by satisfying material *exercise* their comprehension powers. Preparing and giving an il-

lustrated report on animals of the Congo to a group who knows much and cares much about those animals and their life habits requires careful reading, and re-reading. It involves selection of main ideas and pertinent detail. It involves rejection of unrelated detail. It involves assimilation of data and its re-organization for specific purposes. Such a communication experience in elementary or high school necessitates reading of several sources and integration of those sources. It makes reading an arc of the larger communication experience of which it is a natural part. Here reading meets a real comprehension test rather than a fabricated one. This test is both objective and subjective.

Whether such communication is formally illustrated, organized, and reported or spontaneously shared it is still the person-to-person communication act which measures and validates the reading experience. Relating of reading experience to other persons is fundamental. It is proposed here that a basic problem of reading instruction is how to arrange optimum of normal exercise of reading comprehension abilities so that a minimum of artificial exercise may suffice to assure the more academic externals of adequate test performance. More attention needs to be given to the use of personal comprehension powers than to the isolation of so-called comprehension skills. (*Please turn to page 57*)

## Where Shall We Start in Reading?

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THE VERY TITLE of this article reflects the change that has taken place in the philosophy and practice of the teaching of reading. There was a time when the question, "Where shall we start in reading?" would have been a foolish question indeed. Everyone—teachers, parents, school directors, and pupils knew where you started in reading. You started on Page One and without deviation proceeded to the last page. Should any pupil be unfortunate enough to be so slow that he failed to complete the last page, everyone knew what happened to him. He failed to pass. What happened then? Everyone knew that, too.

He repeated the grade. And where did he start in reading? On Page One, of course. Everyone knew that's where you started to read in September. The "good old days" are indeed gone when the place where we start in reading is open to question!

The present age of reading instruction has its own trite answer to the question. Today you start "where the child is." Only this time everybody doesn't know what that means. Parents don't, school directors don't, pupils don't, and sometimes those of us who are in the business of teaching children to read wonder if the words mean anything.

The old starting place for reading—Page One, was abandoned because it expressed so limited and narrow a concept of reading that it failed to be effective.

It has been replaced by a new starting place "where the child is" which by contrast is so general a statement that seeds of failure may lie in its very broadness: "Where the child is"—we need to look at many specific points if the words are to have meaning to the teachers, to the pupils, and through them to the public.

#### **We Start in Reading Where Interest Lies**

This is readily observable if you watch a family divide up the Sunday paper—Junior gets the comics, Mother gets the society page—Father gets the sports section, while sister reads the magazine section. As we give instruction in reading we get the best results when we start the pupils "where they are" in interest. This is the reason why the experience charts and the daily news are effective reading materials for the primary grades. As the children dictate the stories for the charts or tell the items that are included in the news they tell the things that they are interested in. They enjoy reading the things they are interested in and have written about. (Author's note—Guess what article in *The Reading Teacher* I read first this month!) As the pupils become older they develop many interests and they like to read about them. The ease with which eleven and twelve year old boys, boys who have had unsuccessful school experiences with reading, read

*Science Fiction* and magazines such as *Popular Mechanics* with enjoyment and understanding should emphasize for teachers the truth that much can be accomplished in reading if we will start at the point of interest.

#### **We Start in Reading Where Success is Assured**

Each of us as adults likes to appear in a favorable light when we are in a new situation. As adults we know what it means to "make a good impression on the boss." Children have that same desire. Each September finds most school children in a new situation, with a new teacher. They want to succeed, they want to make a good impression on the teacher. If we start these children where they are, we start them in reading material which they can read successfully. It may be new material that is several grades below the grade in which the child is placed, it may be material which he has read successfully in the preceding grade. In any event, it will be material that he can read so easily that he will not experience failure in his first days in a new situation with a new "boss." The confidence in his own ability to succeed in reading in the new grade makes a sound foundation from which to proceed to more difficult work. The start may be slow, but the progress will be more rapid if we will start when the child can be successful.

#### **We Start Where the Pupil Left Off in His Last Formal Reading Instruction**

Here is the heart of our modern philosophy of the teaching of reading. At this starting point we implement

our belief in continuous progress. The pupil does not skip areas of reading instruction, nor does he repeat—he goes on. During the very first weeks while the pupils are reading easy material which builds their confidence in their ability to succeed in the work of the new room, the teacher is planning for the continuation of the reading experience. The records of each child's progress are studied. The results of reading tests are noted. The former teacher's report of the reading done by the child during the previous school term is carefully examined. From all the data available the teacher determines starting place that will take the pupil from "where he is" ahead on the road to successful reading.

#### **We Start Where There is a Need That Can Be Met by the Acquiring of a Reading Skill**

This starting place "where the child is" in relation to his reading needs, is the point at which the specific reading skills are best taught. When do we start to teach phonics? When the pupil needs to know the sound with which a word begins — when he needs to know a way to pronounce a new word —when he needs to have a tool to unlock the dictionary. When do we teach the skill of skimming? When the pupil arrives at the place where he needs to do a lot of reading rapidly. When do we teach the skill of reading for recall and retention? When the skill is needed as the pupil begins to study geography and history. We teach complicated skills most effectively when we start at the time when the pupils realize their need for the skill.

#### **We Start Where the Pupil Is Comfortable and Free From Tensions**

This starting place is not always easy to find. Some people, disregarding what we have learned from child development studies, call this "soft" teaching. The truth is, that unless we do find this starting place, our most earnest endeavors to teach children to read are not productive of the hoped for results. In a sixth grade there may be a boy who should be reading material on a Second Grade level, but he is so conscious of reading "baby material" that he is uncomfortable and tense. He will not learn to read in a Second Reader. He may learn if we find material of Second Grade difficulty but with no resemblance to a reader which he associates with Second Grade. Some girls are so acutely uncomfortable and unhappy when they are not in a reading group with their "best friends" that their reading becomes poorer instead of better as they work in ability groups. One of the skills which the master teachers possess is the ability to detect how a child feels and to plan to ease any tension that stands between him and learning.

There is no one way that acts as a miracle drug. There is no prescription that fits all cases. The teacher who will take time and thought to discover where the individual pupil is in his interest, his ability, his confidence, his needs, and his feelings and will plan to start instruction in reading where the child is in relation to all or one of them will have a maximum of success. A good start is half the race.

## WHAT RESEARCH SAYS TO THE TEACHER OF READING

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### RATE OF READING

ONE OF THE MOST controversial issues in teaching reading today concerns the amount of emphasis to place on speed of reading. Reports from reading clinics have shown that phenomenal increases in reading rate were made by selected persons. Furthermore, current newspapers and magazines have glamorized these reports. Added to this is the pressure exerted by persons who sell instruments. Therefore, it is not surprising that teachers frequently raise questions about whether emphasis on rapid reading is justified; the best methods to use; and whether rapid increases in rate are permanent. Despite the fact that research has not yet provided answers to many of these questions, this paper will point out the trends that seem to be emerging from the research available at the present time.

### Shall We Teach Rapid Reading?

Studies of the growth in rate of reading have been reported since the beginning of this century. In 1925, Gray<sup>1</sup> pointed out that rate of silent reading increases rapidly during the first four or five grades, but less rapidly in the upper grades. Research since that time has confirmed this conclusion. The studies of the average rate of

reading among adults reveal that the gains tend to be fairly small during high school and college.

Buswell<sup>2</sup> and others have experimented with college students and adults and have concluded that rate of reading easy material can be increased significantly without loss of comprehension.

Likewise, a number of investigations have revealed that students at the high school level may learn to read more rapidly. It is interesting to note that students who are bright and who rank in the upper quartile of their classes may improve as much or more than those who are designated as poor readers.

There are fewer reports of research done with pupils at the elementary level. Of these, one by Bridges<sup>3</sup> seems particularly pertinent. She experimented with two groups of pupils from Grades IVA-VIA. Rate of reading was emphasized with one group and comprehension with the second while a third group served as a control. The group given instruction in comprehension made greater gains in all aspects of reading, and as much improvement in rate, as the one in which speed was emphasized. Analysis of the subgroups revealed that emphasis on

<sup>1</sup>G. T. Buswell, *Remedial Reading at the College and Adult Levels*, Supplementary Educational Monographs, No. 56, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1939.

<sup>2</sup>Lucile Hudson Bridges, "Speed Versus Comprehension in Elementary Reading", *Journal of Educational Psychology*, XXXII, (April 1941), 814-20.

<sup>3</sup>William Scott Gray, *Summary of Investigations Relating to Reading*, Supplementary Educational Monographs, No. 28, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1925.

speed at Grades IVA and VB appeared to inhibit growth in comprehension. On the other hand, pupils in Grades VA through VIA appeared to profit from instruction designed to increase reading rate.

While further research is needed to support definite conclusions, the results to date indicate that pupils in the first five grades in the elementary school make rapid progress in speed of reading as a result of learning to recognize words and learning to comprehend the printed text. Thereafter, it seems that proper instruction in learning to read easy material rapidly, leads to improvement in rate of reading without loss of comprehension. It seems clear, therefore, that some emphasis on reading rate is justified for pupils at Grades VI and above, although rate should be only one phase of reading instruction.

### What Methods Shall We Use?

Most experiments have shown that any method which emphasizes speed of reading results in some improvement. The methods considered have included recording the time required to read certain selections; encouraging wide reading of easy materials; marking fixation points or spacing phrases on typewritten sheets; use of motion-picture and strip films; training with the Metronoscope; quick exposure training with the tachistoscope; and the use of various reading pacers.

Only a few studies have compared two or more of the foregoing techniques. Carson<sup>4</sup> set up four comparable groups of third-grade pupils, and evaluated phrase reading, extensive free-reading in the library, and training on the Metronoscope. Her conclusion that extensive free library reading was as effective as mechanical techniques in increasing reading rate at this level is significant.

On the other hand, at the college level, Wedeen<sup>5</sup> equated three groups, one of which had timed exercises, a second used a reading pacer, and a third served as a control. The group using the pacer made greater gains in reading rate but there was little gain in comprehension. Both experimental groups surpassed the control group. A number of other studies of this type at the college levels have produced less conclusive results.

At present, one may conclude that extensive reading of easy material at the elementary level may improve rate of reading, especially if the teacher places emphasis on this skill. Timed exercises likewise seem to be effective. Mechanical devices have been more frequently evaluated at the college level, with less conclusive results. In general, they seem to produce rapid gains in reading rate without significant change in comprehension. However, the permanence of this gain has been questioned by many investigators.

### Permanence of Rate Gains

Only a few reports have been made of changes in reading rate after in-

<sup>4</sup>Eloise Boeker Cason, *Mechanical Methods for Increasing the Speed of Reading*. Contributions to Education, No. 878, New York: Teachers College Columbia University, 1943.

<sup>5</sup>Shirley Wedeen "Mechanical Versus Non-Mechanical Reading Techniques for College Freshmen", *School and Society*, LXXIX, (April 17, 1954) 121-23.

struction ceases. Bish<sup>6</sup> experimented with high-school seniors who ranked average or above in their class. With mechanical devices, he found highly significant gains in reading speed during nine weeks of instruction, accompanied by insignificant loss in comprehension. Twenty-four pupils were tested nine weeks after training was discontinued, and of them, eleven continued to increase in reading rate.

On the other hand, Westover<sup>7</sup> found that with college students, reading speed can be improved but after the practice effect has worn off, the trained and untrained groups show no significant differences in reading speed or comprehension. Thus he doubts the permanent value of instruction directed to increase reading rate.

An unpublished study of 18 high-school students at the University of Chicago Reading Clinic was made, in which they returned for testing at intervals of six months and one year. These students had been given specific instructions to increase rate of reading easy material and had practiced on one of the reading pacers. On the average, there was little loss of speed after a year had elapsed. Some students had continued to read even more rapidly while others decreased in reading speed. An investigation of those students who had not maintained their increased rate showed that they had done little or no reading of easy materials, but had read only study-type

materials. Since the latter should be read at a slower rate, it appeared that these students had lost efficiency through disuse of this ability.

In summary, one may conclude that there is still some doubt as to whether rapid gains in reading rate will be maintained, especially unless this skill is used frequently.

### Other Considerations

Instruction to increase reading rate must always take into account the difficulty of the material and the purpose for reading. This implies that each person should have many reading rates at his command. Research shows that the mature reader will vary his reading rate, using a very rapid rate for materials in which the vocabulary and concepts are familiar and when the purpose is to get the general idea of the selection. On the other hand, difficult or unfamiliar context is read at a slower rate, especially when the purpose is to secure full meaning and to evaluate the ideas presented by the author. Therefore, the teacher should always select easy material and set the appropriate purpose when attempting to develop maximum speed. In addition comprehension questions should be constructed in harmony with the purpose for reading.

Furthermore, practice in changing rates should be provided regularly. Otherwise, the student may attempt to read difficult materials rapidly too. In this case, comprehension will not be satisfactory.

Research supports the conclusion that reading is a complex task, and the exact components have not yet been

<sup>6</sup>Charles E. Bish, "An experiment in Reading Improvement", *National Association of Secondary School Principals' Bulletin*, XXXVI, (January, 1952) 89-96.

<sup>7</sup>Frederick Lowell Westover, *Controlled Eye Movements versus Practice Exercises in Reading*, P. 67 Contributions to Education, No. 917, New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1946.

identified. It is safe to conclude that reading requires thinking; hence students should never be urged to read more rapidly than they are able to think about the context. This implies that there will be wide variations in maximum reading speed attained by different persons. Practice supports the conclusion that the range of reading rates is wider when specific instruction in this area is given at any academic level.

At present, it is not possible to predict the expected maximum rate for a particular student. Michell<sup>8</sup> used tests of tempo to explore the possibility of prediction, but no conclusive results have been secured.

<sup>8</sup>June Frary Mitchell, "Prediction of Increase in Silent Reading Rate", *Clinical Studies in Reading II*, p. 89-93. Supplementary Educational Monographs, No. 77. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953.

### Concluding Statement

The reading rate of children in the first four or five grades increases rapidly as they master the skills of recognizing words and securing meaning from the printed page. Thereafter, rate increases very slowly, or in some instances, remains stable. Instruction to increase rate of comprehension may be profitable, if it is adjusted to the particular needs of the learners and to the purpose and level of difficulty of the materials. Flexibility in rate of reading should always be maintained and comprehension is paramount at all times. The methods used should closely approach the normal reading situation, and continued emphasis on flexibility of rate is suggested.

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## WHAT OTHER MAGAZINES ARE SAYING ABOUT THE TEACHING OF READING

MURIEL POTTER

MICHIGAN STATE NORMAL COLLEGE

"Reading Development of Gifted Children." Ruth Strang. *Elementary English*, January 1954.

Gifted children learn to read early. They are exceptionally interested in reading, they are precocious in their choice of reading materials, and they read intensively in the fields of their special interests. They have been reported to use reading as a means of escape from social maladjustment. In some cases they have been poor readers in spite of intellectual superiority.

Dr. Strang studied the reading autobiographies of 54 pupils in the seventh, eighth and ninth grades, whose IQ's were 120 or over. She was able to make the following generalizations:

Gifted children reported that they learned to read early, about half of them at five years or earlier. They reported great eagerness to read. Most of them were taught by members of their families; a few learned "all by themselves." Methods mentioned are sounding out words, use of flash cards, memorizing common words, associating words with pictures, learning words in simple sentences. Various reading materials were used.

Gifted children have interests in reading similar to those of other children. They read more widely, however. In the fourth grade they read many series books. They also read in the field of a special interest if it developed.

By seventh grade the girls like romantic and teen-age stories; both boys and girls like excitement and suspense in recreational reading. Specialized interests in science and language, and in the words of preferred authors appear with increasing age.

These gifted children read on the average from three to twenty hours a week. They find time for reading along with many other activities. They rarely have difficulty in obtaining books they wish to read; they use libraries and have books at home, or have money available to purchase books. Some difficulties may arise out of libraries not possessing the special materials these children desire. They show maturity and efficiency in their reading habits. When asked for suggestions as to how teachers may help children read, they made recommendations summarized by Dr. Strang as follows:

1. Make interesting literature available; help children choose their books; encourage them to read in order to find and widen their interests.
2. Allow more time for reading in class, for free reading; encourage short book reports.
3. Teach good reading methods.

We grown-ups can hardly improve on these recommendations.

"Vocabulary Analysis of Thirteen Second Grade Readers." Dorothy M.

Vollbrecht. *Elementary English*, April 1954.

This article summarizes the results of a study intended to evaluate the difficulty of readers in terms of (1) the number of new words presented in each series, (2) the number of words found only in each series, and (3) the percent of the total series vocabulary that these new words comprise.

The number of new words in these second grade readers ranged from 236 to 578. Examining the words which appeared in only one series, the investigator found wide differences. One series used only 22 words which appeared in no other of the readers, while another, at the other end of the scale, used 130. There was no single word which was taught as a new word in all thirteen readers. Of the 1914 different words in these second grade books, 805 were found in only one of them.

This study indicates that the child of primary reading level who can read almost any second grade book is extremely versatile. It also makes clear the extreme difficulty of the problem confronting the poor reader who is moved from book to book in a program which does not use one single basic reader sequence.

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"Readability of Certain Textbooks."  
Leroy N. Wood, *Elementary English*, April 1954.

This investigator studied twelve intermediate grade textbooks in science and social science, in the following manner:

Two readability formulas, Yoakam and Dale-Chall, were used on each

text. Thirty-two intermediate grade teachers who used these textbooks were asked to evaluate them.

The two formulas agreed closely on the grade placement of most of the textbooks. Because it is simpler, the use of the Yoakam formula alone is recommended in evaluating textbooks of this level.

The teachers and the formulas agreed that all the science books were suitable in difficulty to the grades in which they were used. The teachers approved nine books, the formulas seven. The teachers and the formulas agreed in rejecting two of the three history books studied. The teachers approved two geography books while the formula approved only one. The teachers approved of all three health books, while the formula results approved two.

The investigator suggests that since there is occasional disagreement between teachers and formula results, both teacher judgment and readability criteria should be used when textbooks are to be selected. He also makes additional suggestions for further study of textbook selection on the basis of readability.

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"Four Methods of Teaching Reading."  
E. W. Dolch. *Elementary English*, February 1954.

This article names and discusses four methods of teaching reading in order to evaluate them. Dr. Dolch points out that good teachers have tended to combine these methods, and describes each in detail.

The *All-Oral Method* stressed reading as elocution, "recitation" or some

audible verbal response, and assumed material read would have literary value. The *All-Silent Method* was developed in an effort to by-pass the pronunciation of words in early reading.

The *Silent-Oral Method* incorporated the basic purpose of the *All-Silent Method*, learning to read silently in order to read more rapidly, and it resulted in the various suggestions for pre-teaching of new words in isolation before they are met in context. This method also introduced the directions given to children to "read silently" in their first examination of new reading material. The difficulty with this method is that children do not always learn new words with one exposure, nor do they remember every word they have previously been "taught." Thus oral reading must be used to check the individual's silent reading. It is also assumed that the children will have word-attack skills and can deal competently with unfamiliar words met in silent reading.

The *Oral-Silent Method* reverses the method above, and requires oral reading first, in order that help may be given with all unknown words, whether previously taught or not. Silent reading follows the first oral reading, remotivated by questions or other purposes. Dr. Dolch recommends this method especially for teaching word attack by demonstration. Such initial oral reading must be followed by genuine, correct silent reading, or silent reading skill will not develop.

Most teachers use several of these methods in combination. If reading material is difficult for a group of chil-

dren, the teacher tends to use the "all-oral" method. If the reading material is easy for the children, the method used is likely to be the "all-silent" one. Frequently new words are pre-taught and then the teacher asks her group to read silently. On occasion, difficult reading materials are handled by oral reading during which new words are met and analyzed phonetically.

"Interrelationships between Reading and Other Language Arts Areas." Agatha Townsend. *Elementary English*, February 1954.

This summary article will be of great interest to every teacher of reading. It covers the topics Reading Readiness and Beginning Reading, including writing and spelling; Reading and English; Reading and Looking, Listening and Speaking; Reading and Language for Older Groups; Study of the Handicapped; and Clues from Remedial Work. A useful summary with an excellent bibliography.

"Do Reading Tests Test Reading?" E. W. Dolch. *Elementary English*, April 1954.

Dr. Dolch names five factors in reading ability — *Sight Vocabulary*, which can be tested only by inference; *Sounding Ability*, which should be tested in situations that do not offer the support of context, or use "sight" words; *Meaning Vocabulary*, which requires preliminary pronunciation of the word in most cases; *Sentence Comprehension*, which is never well measured by standardized tests, because the length and complexity of each sentence affect its difficulty; and *Larger Unit Comprehension*, or the recogni-

tion of the main idea or paragraph point, which is effectively tested on most standardized reading tests.

Dr. Dolch points out that most reading tests present a mixture of these factors and each score represents little in the way of assistance to the teacher in deciding what teaching a child needs. In other words, reading tests are not diagnostic. Moreover, he continues, results on reading tests are in part the result of study factors rather than reading factors.

Since reading tests are constructed in a sequence of items from very easy to very difficult, as a child continues to work through a test he must bring into use every study device he knows, to get the answers. His reading speed slows accordingly. Dr. Dolch calls these study devices *skip-and-guess ability*, *skimming ability*, *selective reading*, and *finding answers to questions*. Thus a satisfactory score on a reading test for any child tests his ability to use study devices as well as to read. The recommendation of this article is that future reading tests be constructed so as to be aids in teaching; and if such tests are to be useful they should be worked out from an analysis similar to the one presented in the discussion.

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"Perceptual Retardation in Reading Disability Cases." James C. Coleman. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, December 1953.

This article, stressing the importance of inadequate readiness in perceptual functions as a factor in reading disability, describes an experiment intended to examine perceptual de-

velopment in individuals suffering from reading disability.

The investigator cites the findings of Townsend, whose research indicates that copying is more a function of perceptual ability than of motor skills, and that between the ages of five and seven there is a rapid increase of ability to reproduce both the parts of a figure and its shape.

The investigator then studied a group of 40 male reading disability cases at the Clinical School of the University of California at Los Angeles, of whom 33 were under thirteen years of age. All were of average intelligence or better, and free from emotional or physical handicaps. He used the Otis Alpha Test because all its items are sets of four pictures, of which three have one major aspect in common while the fourth is different. He converted his subjects' scores to mental ages by the use of the norms for this test, and used this score to represent the perceptual discrimination ability of each subject. (Scores of other intelligence test place less emphasis on perceptual discrimination, and more on other intelligence factors.)

The 33 child subjects consistently scored lower on the Otis than on other intelligence tests, and the investigator concludes that perceptual discrimination may be regarded as an independent function separate from general intelligence. He found his subjects as a group were almost a year retarded in perceptual development, as compared with the general population of their age. Retardation ranged from one to 46 months, while six children were advanced beyond their age group. The

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## The Relationship Between The Reader's Attitude And Certain Types Of Reading Response

By Anne Selley McKillop

Here is a recent study with important implications both for the theory of reading and for the practice of teaching reading. The author explores the effect of prejudice on comprehension, interpretation, and evaluation of reading passages.

Professor McKillop found a tendency to label as false or stupid passages which did not fit in with the reader's attitudes. The implications of these findings for helping youngsters make judgments on the basis of materials read will interest reading specialists. Other researchers in reading will find the design of the dissertation particularly interesting.

Published in 1952

101 pp. Cloth \$2.75

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Teachers College Columbia University  
New York 27, New York

older children in the study showed more serious perceptual retardation, suggesting that the difficulty may be cumulative.

The experimenter raises the question of the causes of such retardation. Have these children limited their experience through overemphasis on a few interests? Are they negatively conditioned by pressuring parents to dislike activities involving such perceptual discriminations? Are there perceptual types, and do these perceptually retarded children represent a type that learns primarily through contacts and experiences that are not visual? Are there emotional and personality factors which enter into perceptual retardation?

This reviewer has seen in reading clinics many children who showed the perceptual retardation described, either as a result of undiagnosed serious handicap in vision, or without identifiable cause. Such children had normal scores or better on intelligence tests, like the subjects of this study. Further investigation of the experiential background of such children might throw light on the problem.

"Groping or Grouping." Constance M. McCullough. *Elementary English*, March 1954.

This lively article in dialogue form discusses wittily some of our fads and catch-words in reading methods. Highly recommended, and entirely too good to paraphrase.

"Program for Remedial Reading." Elizabeth V. Richmond. *Elementary School Journal*, January 1954.

This article describes remedial read-

ing instruction as an integral part of the program of the Keith Country Day School. Classroom and reading teachers work together, and special assignments are carried on in classroom study periods.

Candidates for special reading instruction are usually children retarded two grades or more in reading achievement on the basis of survey tests given throughout the school, and on reports from classroom teachers. Special cases are admitted in addition to those selected by the survey method. About one quarter of the school population receives special help during most years. During the 1951-52 school year, the largest number came from grade three—7 of 21 children.

The procedure at the school is as follows: A complete case study is made, including the administration of tests of verbal and non-verbal intelligence, perception and dominance. The Durrell-Sullivan Reading Capacity Test I is used, and also the test item of copying the diamond from the Revised Stanford-Binet Scale. Reading tests, formal and informal, are also given.

Both small-group instruction and individual tutoring are employed as needed. Games situations are used for motivation and to provide a "sense of belonging." The Fernald approach is used with some children. The typewriter is used for the composition of stories, and a child may begin his reading instruction with the reading of his own story. Notebooks, scrapbooks, hand tachistoscopes and the blackboard are used.

(Please turn to page 61)

## CHILDREN'S BOOKS AND THE TEACHING OF READING

Good Lists of Recommended Books  
Help Both Teachers and Pupils

NANCY LARRICK

EDUCATION DIRECTOR

RANDOM HOUSE CHILDREN'S BOOKS

(This is the first of a series of brief reports on "Children's Books and the Teaching of Reading" to be prepared for each issue of *The Reading Teacher* by Nancy Larrick, former editor of the magazine. The December report will be devoted to "Securing Children's Books for Exhibit and Evaluation.")

Lists of recommended children's books are an invaluable aid to teachers and pupils in their search for the right book for the right child on every occasion. Once the teacher knows the child's interests, she can direct those interests to improvement of reading skills *provided she knows which books to recommend* and provided, of course, that she or the child can locate the books.

And once the child realizes the possibilities of books, he will want to search for particular books to meet his special appetite. Excellent guides to use in such a search are to be found in the wide variety of lists recommending children's books. A number of these are listed below with information as to the availability of each.

### For the Teacher's Desk

*A Bibliography of Books for Children*, edited by Dr. Vera Petersen. 1954 edition. Association for Childhood Education International, 1200 15th St., N. W., Washington 5, D. C. \$1.25.

An annotated list of approximate-

ly 1450 books for children 12 and under. Grouped by subject with suggested grade level.

*Children's Books Too Good to Miss*, compiled by May Hill Arbuthnot and others. 1953 edition. Press of Western Reserve University, Cleveland, Ohio. \$1.00.

A very select list of 200 books for children through age 14, grouped by age level. Delightfully annotated and illustrated.

*Adventuring with Books*, edited by Margaret Clark, chairman. 1950. National Council of Teachers of English, 704 S. 6th St., Champaign, Ill. 60 cents.

An annotated list of about 1350 books for use with elementary school children, arranged by topic with appropriate age-level indicated.

*Books for You, A Reading List for Teen-Agers*, edited by Mark Neville, chairman. 1951. National Council of Teachers of English, 704 S. 6th St., Champaign, Illinois. 40 cents.

Directed to the senior high school this briefly annotated bibliography classifies 1600 titles by subject. No information about publication date, publisher or price.

*Reading Is Fun, A Graded List for Reluctant Readers* compiled by Pauline G. Matthews and Helen Perdue.

1953. LIBRARY JOURNAL, 62 W. 45th St., New York 36. 25 copies, \$1.00.

About 325 books for reluctant readers arranged by reading level. Each book is given an independent reading level and interest level. Grades 1 through 6.

*Gateways to Readable Books* by Ruth Strang and others. Second edition, 1952. H. W. Wilson Co., 950 University Ave., New York. \$2.75.

An annotated graded list of books in many fields for adolescents who find reading difficult.

#### **Vest Pocket List for Parents**

*Growing Up with Books*. 1954. LIBRARY JOURNAL, 62 W. 45 St., New York 36. \$2.25 per 100.

Revised annually this little 32-page booklet (size 3½ x 6) lists 175 books which have proved to be children's best-loved choices from recommended lists of teachers and librarians. Ideal for parents of children 13 and under.

#### **For Those Who Guide the Library**

*A Basic Book Collection for Elementary Grades*, 5th Edition. 1951. American Library Assn., 50 E. Huron St., Chicago 11, Ill. \$2.00.

1000 books considered basic for the small elementary school. Annotated. Classified by Dewey Decimal System.

*A Basic Book Collection for Junior High Schools*, edited by Elsa R. Berner and Mabel Sacra. 1950. American Library Assn., 50 E. Huron St., Chicago 11, Ill. \$1.75.

660 books considered the minimum need for even the smallest junior high school. Annotated. Classified by Dewey Decimal System.

*A Basic Book Collection for High Schools*. Dorothea Dawson, chairman. 5th Edition. 1950. American Library Assn., 50 E. Huron St., Chicago 11, Ill., \$2.75.

Books considered basic for the small high school library. Annotated. Classified by Dewey Decimal System. Also includes lists of periodicals and a selection aid for audio-visual materials.

#### **What Is Basic Reading?**

(Continued from page 43)

#### **Individualization and Mass Media**

In a nation dedicated to equal opportunities for all it is understandable that we have leaned upon textbooks as the most convenient of mass media of instruction, that we have leaned upon them somewhat thoughtlessly at times. Our democratic ideals hold precious the equal right of all to learn the three R's well but confusion has plainly arisen in the practical application of this ideal to education of all individuals. Now well aware of the dangers of regimentation and conformity, parents and teachers can reshape their treatment of both children and books. Individuality of learners is in essential harmony with our democratic beliefs. The use of all sorts of mass media of instruction must be geared to the basic rights of free speech and assembly of free choice of employment and entertainment. Neither conformity nor mediocrity need be the price to pay for mass education. Rather are excellence and diversity the attainable rewards of mass education which in conception and execution is directed toward the rights of individuals.

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                    LISH (Books I and II)  
Carlin and Christ.....ENGLISH ON THE JOB

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Bowen .....YANKEE FROM OLYMPUS

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## I. C. I. R. I. is Growing

THE PAST YEAR has been memorable in the brief history of the *International Council for the Improvement of Reading Instruction*. Among other things, this year has brought a very large increase in the establishment of local councils throughout the United States. It is, perhaps, through the activities of these local chapters that the ICIRI is making its most unique contribution to education in America.

The local councils enable teachers to assemble for discussion of a common interest and a most important instructional need—the improvement of instruction in reading. It is worth noting that ICIRI is the only national educational organization that devotes its attention solely to the field of reading. This concentration of interest results in fostering many worthy individual and group projects designed to improve reading instruction.

As President of the ICIRI, it has been my privilege to visit a rather large number of local councils—at the time of the first meeting of some councils and at the time of regular or annual meetings of others. Invariably, I have been impressed by the enthusiasm of the members of the local councils for the work of the organization and by the optimism of the members about the future. Some of these council meetings have been devoted to planning or to presenting research projects. Others have been concerned about developmental reading as revealed by pro-

grams centering on the role of interests, “developmental tasks”, and the special reading skills needed at different levels of instruction. At one meeting, filmstrips were used to show the characteristics of a developmental program that aimed to offer the gifted child motivation and opportunity for improving his reading skills and extending his interests.

The problems and interests of the local councils were considered in planning the annual meeting of the organization. At this meeting, held this year in Atlantic City at the time of the convention of the American Association of School Administrators, a large and enthusiastic audience reflected the growing influence of the ICIRI on teachers, supervisors, and administrators.

At all of these gatherings, teachers expressed their sincere appreciation for *The Reading Teacher* which, they indicate has become increasingly attractive and helpful. The development of this magazine under the able direction of Nancy Larrick, is another milestone in the progress of ICIRI.

The progress of this organization has been made possible through the cooperation of many people who have given generously of their time and effort. As President of ICIRI, it has been my privilege to work closely with Donald Cleland, Executive Secretary, and with the officers, the board of directors, and other members who, without exception, have been cooperative and tireless in serving the organization. I want to take this opportunity to thank them for this service. And I should like

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to extend at this time my congratulations to Dr. Margaret Robinson, our newly elected President, and to Dr. W. S. Gray, President-Elect. I wish also to express to Dr. J. Allen Figurel, our newly elected Editor of *The Reading Teacher*, my congratulations and assurance of vigorous support in the development of the magazine. Under the leadership of these able people, ICIRI will undoubtedly continue to expand its services and increase its helpfulness to all persons interested in the improvement of reading instruction.

PAUL WITTY  
Past President

### Magazines

(Continued from page 55)

Books are chosen for high interest and low vocabulary level. No readers are placed in the clinic library.

Spelling and arithmetic instruction are given where needed. Workstudy skills and critical reading are emphasized. At upper grade levels the reading-rate controller and tachistoscope are used.

The therapeutic value of good relationship between teacher and pupil is stressed, and children may be reassigned if this relationship does not develop.

Average gain in one year for clinic pupils is one year, though the range of gain is wide. Children continue to use the clinic as a resource. Children dismissed from the clinic show gains of 1.3 to 1.7 grades during a nine-month school year. This is most likely to be true for those children whose difficulty is diagnosed in the primary grades. Children who enter the school

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late, with histories of reading failure, rarely gain sufficiently to be dismissed from the clinic.

## A Message From the President

*Greetings to the Members and Friends of the International Council  
for the Improvement of Reading Instruction!*

A Special Welcome to

Our New Members:

May I take this opportunity of thanking you for the honor bestowed upon me in electing me to be your president? I realize the great responsibility of this office and am counting most seriously on your helpful suggestions and wholehearted support throughout the coming year.

I would like to pay tribute to the unselfish devotion and inspiring leadership of our past president, Dr. Paul Witty, and to members of the Executive under whose guidance this organization has shown steady growth in active membership and additional councils. We appreciate, also, the enthusiasm of the many individual members who have aided in this expansion. Our new members will be interested in learning that last year we had 43 local councils and approximately 4000 members in five countries (including forty-seven states of the U.S.A. and six provinces of Canada).

What does membership in the I.C.I.R.I. mean to us? Why have we joined? Very simply we might reply as follows:

- a. We care about children and their progress. We know that their many individual differences must be considered.
- b. We believe that the ability of how to read and what to read is fundamental to their all-round development. We know that for various reasons many pupils are retarded in reading and in some cases untold unhappiness re-

sults.

- c. Each of us has some special interest in the teaching of reading and desires to belong to and work with a group which has similar objectives.
- d. Not only do we wish to receive help ourselves through becoming familiar with modern trends and research findings, and sharing one another's viewpoints and methods, but we are desirous of helping others — other pupils, other teachers, other parents, other groups.

In short, the underlying philosophy of our organization seems to be similar to that of a service club with far-reaching influence and devolves a challenge and responsibility on us all.

How do we assume this responsibility? Through what means can we both contribute and accept assistance in reading problems?

- a. Daily in our own situations, we can remember that we are members of the I.C.I.R.I. and make the best contribution there of which we are capable.
- b. We should join a local council and if there is none in our area take the initiative in establishing one with a group of interested people. (We need only five members to sponsor a group!) We should make provision for the interchange of information and experiences in our local council regular meetings. Membership in a local council will provide the solution to some of

our problems as well as giving us the inspiration and fellowship so essential to our work.

- c. Those of us who can attend our international meetings should do so. Similar opportunities are provided at these open meetings which are usually held at the time of the conferences of the American Association of School Administrators, and at the time of our annual assembly meetings in May.
- d. We commend highly our official and flourishing magazine, *The Reading Teacher*, to all for

study. There we can find much helpful information and thought-provoking material which can be used for discussion at our local council meetings. We should prize each issue, share it with others, and try to send in new subscriptions frequently.

For the sake of students everywhere may we all improve in the instruction of reading is the wish of your president.

Here's to a successful year!

MARGARET A. ROBINSON  
President

## News of Local Reading Councils

As this issue of the magazine went to press a new school term was just beginning and most of the councils who elected new officers in the spring, reported their programs for the coming year were still in the planning stages.

Since the purpose of the news is to acquaint each other with the various reading activities carried on to improve reading instruction and to help other councils plan for variety in their programs by sharing ideas, your attention is directed to a resume of some of these activities in addition to lectures, conferences, panel discussions and demonstrations.

The Long Island Council, Hempstead, New York, sent out a four-page mimeographed newsletter which they entitled "Reading Exchange". The Editor explained that their purpose was "to serve as a medium of exchange of ideas, practices and items of information in the field of reading

• • •

*Local Councils are urged to send news of their meetings and plans for the future to Miss Josephine Tronsberg, Reading Laboratory, University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh 13, Pennsylvania, who is Local Council Editor.*

• • •

among themselves" there on Long Island. They hoped "to arrange visits to observe ideas in practice, to arrange an informal meeting with a colleague in the next community or on the opposite shore to discuss common problems, to use the "Reading Exchange" to report new techniques with which they had experimented and found successful or use its pages to debate the several controversial issues in reading." The newsletter includes, an account of the history of the organization of the council, the advantages of being a member and a report on the meetings to date. The Publications

Committee felt it would be worthwhile to have various interested people concerned with their schools write on what the school reading program meant to them. Accordingly, a parent was asked to express her views in this first issue.

Several other councils have recognized the value of including in their programs people who are not in the teaching profession, but who are interested in securing for children every possible advantage. The Conference on Gifted Children, sponsored jointly by the Lancaster Branch of the Pennsylvania Conference for Education of Exceptional Children and the Lancaster City and County Council, Lancaster, Pennsylvania, included a minister, a pediatrician and a librarian in addition to a classroom teacher and guidance counselor, as participants on a Panel Discussion. El Dorado Council, El Dorado, Arkansas, selected as a theme for one of their meetings, "The Parents' Place in the Reading Program" and turned over the entire meeting to a group of interested parents. Capitol Council, Columbus, Ohio, Westchester Council, Westchester, New York and Gerald A. Yoakam Council, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, included in their programs specialists in vision, hearing or speech or all three.

Long Island Council, Hempstead, New York, Capitol Council, Washington, D. C., Toronto and District Council, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, Orangeburg Council, Orangeburg, South Carolina and Kanawha Council, Charleston, West Virginia, found

reading workshops of great benefit.

Long Island Council, Hempstead, New York and Gerald A. Yoakam Council have been engaged in a research project this past year.

Most of the councils have had dinner meetings and a few finished the year with a picnic.

The number of meetings held varies. Some Councils meet every month during the school year, others meet bi-monthly and one or two councils meet only semi-annually. Some councils divide into groups according to interest or grade level and hold small group meetings every month and then meet as one large group two or three times a year. Several councils plan to join other local councils in adjoining areas occasionally for the purpose of hearing a noted authority in the reading field.

Toronto and District Council, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, has planned to have Dr. A. S. Artley of University of Missouri and Miss Elizabeth Simpson of Science Research Associates as speakers on this year's program. Group meetings in the form of demonstrations followed by discussions under the direction of Miss Dorothy Lorimer of Ginn and Company have also been planned.

The Gerald A. Yoakam Council, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, had as its first speaker for the current year, Dr. Jack Birch, Psychologist, University of Pittsburgh, who spoke on "The Exceptional Child in the Classroom."

The I.C.I.R.I. has to date fifty-one local councils.





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